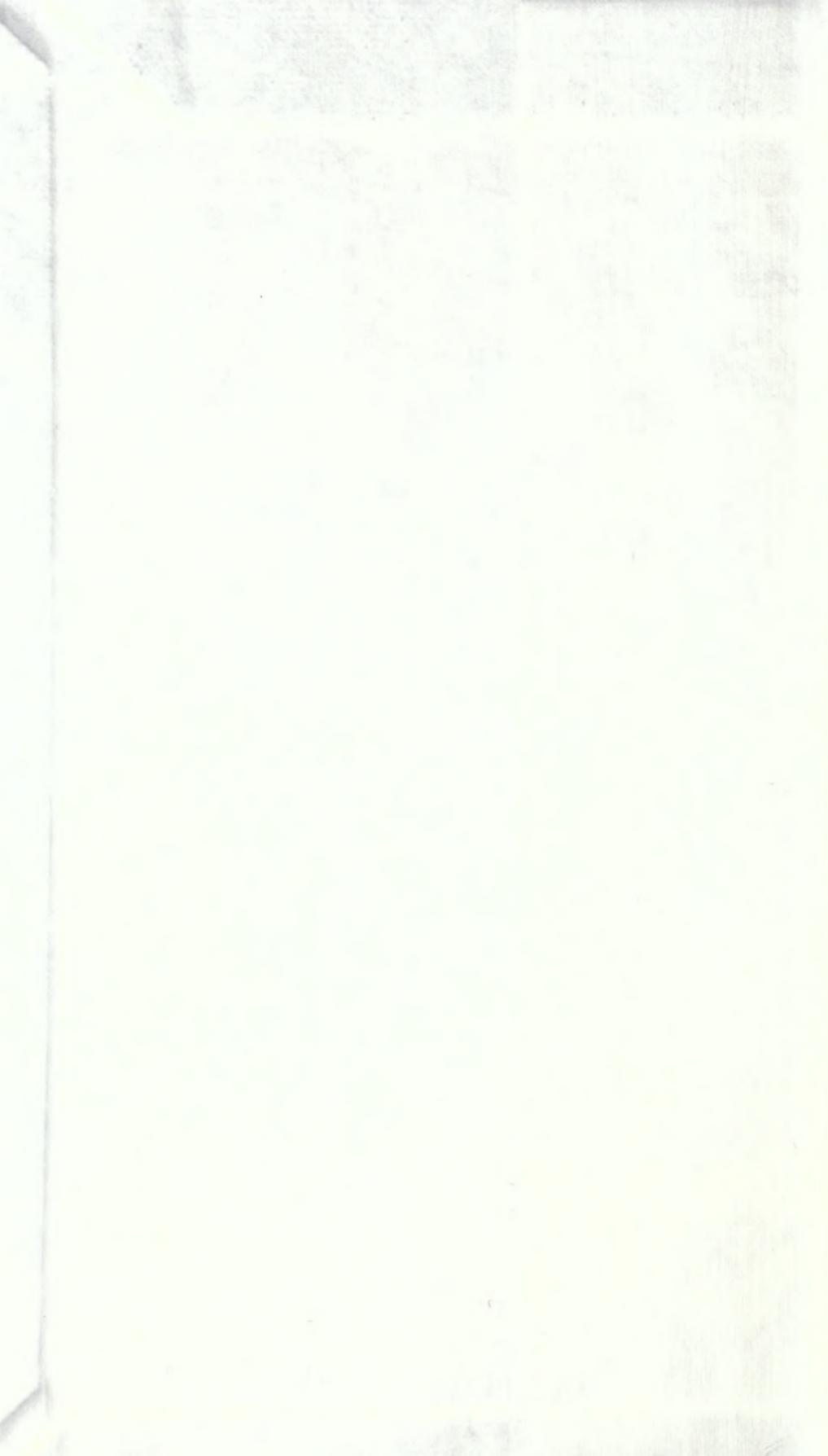


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# **FOURTEEN YEARS IN PARLIAMENT**





# FOURTEEN YEARS IN PARLIAMENT

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## PREFACE

THE following pages do not pretend to be a complete history of the fourteen eventful years with which they deal. (The time has not yet arrived for pronouncing final judgment on the causes which led to the extraordinary success which attended the Unionist Party during the earlier part of this period, and to its even more phenomenal ruin at the end.) Nor are they an autobiography or a diary. A diary in the strict sense I could never keep, nor would I presume to inflict on the reader an account of my own personal doings. I have aimed simply at narrating in order a series of events which happened around me, and of most of which I was an eyewitness, and at recording the impressions made on my mind at the time. It would be idle to deny that my outlook on to the political world is that of a Churchman, a Conservative, and a Tariff Reformer, and I have not attempted to disguise my opinions. At the same time I have tried to be fair to political opponents, and have always realised that in this country happily we may differ profoundly with a man's opinions, and yet respect and even admire him personally. In this spirit this book is offered to the public, and I hope it may prove to be not devoid of interest to students of modern politics.



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## PART I

1892 TO 1900

### THE TRIUMPH OF THE UNIONIST PARTY



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY—THE STATE OF PARTIES IN 1892

IN his admirable biography of his father, Mr Winston Churchill comments on the remarkable phenomenon, that the lowering of the franchise in 1884 led to practically twenty years of Tory Rule. That such a result should have followed was certainly not expected either by the Liberal statesmen who carried the Franchise Act, nor by the Tories who vainly fought against it in the House of Commons, and supported the House of Lords in refusing to pass it unless it were accompanied by Redistribution. And it is difficult to resist the conclusion that such a result never could have followed, but for Mr Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule in 1886. Up to that point the Liberal tide appeared to be flowing strongly in this country, and, indeed, all over Western Europe. Notwithstanding the interminable administrative blunders of the Gladstone administration of 1880-1885, which culminated in the loss of the Soudan and the death of General Gordon, the Liberal Party obtained a majority at the General Election of 1885 of no less than 172, if the Nationalists were reckoned on their side, while, if the Nationalists voted with the Conservatives, there was a tie. The Sun of Toryism,

which had blazed forth temporarily in 1874, appeared to have set for ever with the death of Lord Beaconsfield. Fortunately Mr Gladstone was not satisfied with the majority vouchsafed to him at the polls. For reasons which will be held to be either the noblest or the most ignoble, according as he is judged by friend or foe, he suddenly, in the early spring of 1886, threw away his Unionist principles and capitulated to Parnell. There can be no doubt that he miscalculated his power in the country and over his own party. All his best and most trusty lieutenants deserted him. The Liberal Party and its organisation were rent in twain. And even though, thanks to his matchless eloquence and energy, he was able in time to get up a certain amount of popular feeling in the country in favour of the Nationalist cause, and to win a partial electoral triumph in 1892, it is certain that the English elector, or, as Lord Rosebery subsequently put it, "the predominant partner" never cared about Home Rule at all, indeed was generally antagonistic. Mr Gladstone's policy became in fact a millstone hung round the Liberal neck for twenty years, and the Liberals had no chance, however low the franchise might be reduced, of regaining the confidence of the people, until either they had persuaded them that the millstone was no longer there, or the sins and follies of their opponents had diverted attention to the millstones which they had hung round themselves.

The immediate result of the Home Rule policy was the General Election of 1886, when, at the age of seventy-six, Mr Gladstone was again relegated to opposition with a Unionist majority of more than 100 over Liberals and Nationalists combined. The task of the new Government, however, was not an easy one.

The Liberal Unionists, especially their Radical wing, led by Mr Chamberlain, appeared to be poles asunder from the Tories on all questions except that of Home Rule for Ireland. They refused to take office, and the Government, which was a purely Conservative one, headed by Lord Salisbury, was not remarkable for administrative strength or debating talent. By far the most conspicuous figure was Lord Randolph Churchill, who had succeeded Sir Michael Hicks-Beach as leader of the party in the House of Commons, and held the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Before the Government was six months old, however, Lord Randolph suddenly resigned, and, hoping apparently to terminate the political life of his colleagues, terminated only his own. He discovered then, as others have done before, that no man is indispensable. The accession of Mr Goschen to the Government gave it a stability which Lord Randolph's presence denied it, and strengthened the alliance with the Liberal Unionists. In Ireland an attempt to govern without coercion proved a complete failure, and caused a temporary breakdown of Sir M. Hicks-Beach's health, who, in consequence, resigned his post of Chief Secretary. He was succeeded by Mr Balfour, till then little known except as an erstwhile member of the Fourth Party, but who, by his admirable firmness, secured for himself a reputation which subsequently carried him to far higher office. The leadership of the House of Commons devolved on Mr W. H. Smith, who was certainly safe rather than brilliant.

Meanwhile the Opposition, led by Mr Gladstone, were making frantic efforts to convert the country to Home Rule. Every advantage was taken, and the denunciations of Mr Balfour and

the "Coercionist" régime recalled the Midlothian speeches in the days of the Bulgarian atrocities. Irish politics practically dominated English platforms—audiences would listen to nothing else. The Liberal and Nationalist Parties became more and more closely allied, and prominent Nationalists like Mr Dillon and Mr W. O'Brien were frequent speakers at meetings in England. Concurrently with this movement the alliance between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists was gradually strengthened, and while the Government became more "liberal," bringing in such measures as the Act which established County Councils, the out-and-out Radicalism of Mr Chamberlain and his friends was visibly abating.

Notwithstanding this, however, there can be no doubt that from 1886 up to 1890 Mr Gladstone was making some progress in his conversion of the predominant partner to Home Rule. Several causes contributed. Irish debates occupied such an immense amount of time that many serious people began to think it might be well to cut the knot by getting rid of the Irish members from the British House of Commons altogether. Then the so-called "revelations" of the *Times* newspaper contained in the articles entitled "Parnellism and Crime" (excellent as many of them were and strictly accurate) recoiled on the head of the Unionist Party, owing to the unfortunate publication of the forged letters; and the name "Piggott," shouted from the back of the room, upset many a Unionist meeting. Lastly, the action of some of the landlords in Ireland, and the justification by Mr Gladstone of the "Plan of Campaign," undoubtedly affected the views of many people. If there had been a General Election

in the spring or summer of 1890, it is almost safe to say that Mr Gladstone and the Liberal Party would have been returned by a substantial majority, and could really have obtained what is called a "mandate" to carry Home Rule. But suddenly one of those extraordinary little incidents occurred, which, *pace* the late Professor Freeman and the believers in the "evolution of history," appear to affect the destinies of nations.

In the autumn of 1890 Mr Parnell was discovered, through an action brought in the Divorce Court by Captain O'Shea, one of his colleagues in the House of Commons, to be, what in common parlance is called, "a man of immoral character." It is unnecessary to point out that the expediency or folly of adopting Home Rule could in no way depend on whether Mr Parnell was in private a saint or a sinner. The wisdom of a certain national policy could have no connection with the personal character of one individual. This, however, was not the view of the British public. The sequence of events was remarkable. First of all came a period of complete mystification, accompanied by great jubilation on the part of the Unionists, and by corresponding despondency on the Liberal side. Then the Irish Nationalist Party met in Dublin, and passed a vote of unbounded confidence in Mr Parnell. The Nonconformist conscience in England was stirred, however, and the third stage was marked by protests in the Liberal Press, and demands from Dissenting pulpits that Mr Parnell should be cast off. Lastly, Mr Gladstone, who for over a week had remained a silent watcher of the trend of public opinion, was aroused — a long and wordy letter came from Hawarden—which led to Committee Room 15 and

Mr Parnell's deposition. This may have been perfectly justifiable so far as the individual man was concerned, but why should the cause of Home Rule have been involved? Yet it undoubtedly was, and very seriously. From the moment of Parnell's overthrow all hope of really converting the predominant partner was gone. As a prominent Irish Unionist member of Parliament said, "We ought to put up statues of Kitty O'Shea all over Ulster, for she has saved the Union."

The managers of the Liberal Party, always alert tacticians, were not slow to perceive the change. At a great meeting of the party, held at Newcastle in 1901, the celebrated programme named after that city was adopted. While Home Rule was, out of deference to Mr Gladstone's years and persuasions, still allowed to head the list, an immense number of so-called reforms were added to conciliate every section of Radicalism. The Welsh Nonconformists were to have disestablishment, and Scottish Free-kirkers were to be similarly placated. The teetotalers were promised local option minus compensation for confiscated licenses. Fiscal reforms of a drastic order were promised to those who paid few taxes now and wished to pay fewer in future. Local government was to be extended, not only by establishing District Councils as promised by the Unionists, but by setting up Parish Councils also; and an attempt was even made to popularise Home Rule by describing these councils as "Home Rule in the Village." The farmers were to be bought by Radical reform of the land laws—while the House of Lords was to be either ended or mended. The entire Liberal Party, in fact, became a sort of Cave of Adullam, and "every one that was in debt, and

every one that was in distress, and every one that was discontented gathered themselves unto it."

These tactics were not unsuccessful. The tide of Liberal successes at by-elections continued to flow. But the victories were won not on Home Rule, but on the other issues. A notable case was that of the Harborough Division of Leicestershire, where the Liberal candidate, Mr J. W. Logan, succeeded in capturing the seat from the Unionists, chiefly by the use of a card which pointed out that the poor man paid more in the £ for his tea, beer, and tobacco than the rich man—a result which follows from the fact that the excise and customs duties on these commodities are fixed in character and not *ad valorem*, so that the cheaper the article the higher the percentage of the tax. It was of no consequence that this had nothing to do with the Unionist Government, the duties having been arranged on this basis by Mr Gladstone himself many years before! The suggestion that a beneficent Liberal Government would alter this iniquity (as a matter of fact no attempt to do so has ever been made) was sufficient for the discontented elector—the seat was won, and was duly registered by Mr Gladstone as a victory for Home Rule. Mr Logan's card became after this one of the most effective electioneering weapons in the hands of the Liberal Party, and was instrumental in winning many more seats for Home Rule. Meanwhile the Government concluded its term of office with credit and efficiency. Ireland, under Mr Balfour's vigorous régime, had settled down to comparative repose, and Mr Balfour himself handed over the reins of office to Mr Jackson in 1891, when, on the death of Mr W. H. Smith, he succeeded to the leadership of the House of

Commons, a position which he had fairly earned. The foreign affairs of the country were always in safe keeping with Lord Salisbury. At home the Government had, as the result of pressure from Mr Chamberlain and the Liberal Unionists, introduced and carried free education, a reform for which the people had long clamoured and were never grateful.

The personnel in the House had been changed, not only by the death of Mr Smith, but also by the succession of Lord Hartington to the Peerage, which left Mr Chamberlain leader of the Liberal Unionists in the Commons. The by-election at Rossendale which ensued was remarkable chiefly for the whittling away of Home Rule by the Liberal candidate, Mr Maden, who seemed to regard it chiefly as a means of saving Irish corporations the trouble of coming to London in order to get their Gas and Water Bills passed. As the session of 1892 advanced it became clear that the Government, who had been continuously in office since 1886, intended to dissolve Parliament in the summer, and members became more assiduous in their attentions to their constituents than in their attendance at the House. In June the final Act was accomplished, and Her Majesty's twelfth Parliament ceased to exist.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1892 AND THE FORMATION OF THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

THE General Election of 1892 was probably the hardest fought contest since the Reform Act of 1832. The fortunes of war swayed alternately to one side and the other, and though the Liberals, aided by Mr Gladstone's eloquence and amazing personality, and by the various baits and bribes of the Newcastle Programme, won many seats and more than wiped out the Unionist majority, the results fell far short of their expectations, and completely falsified the political meteorology of the by-elections which Mr Gladstone had tried to elevate into an exact science. In the end the Liberals had a majority of 40, counting the Nationalists on their side, so that while Unionist continuance in office was impossible, their opponents were completely at the mercy of the Irish Party. The composition of their majority was also remarkable. It came entirely from Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, or, as Mr Balfour aptly said, "the Celtic fringe," while in England there was a Unionist majority of 71. Wales really bore the palm for Liberalism, the Unionist representatives being reduced to two, so that it was remarked that the entire Welsh Unionist Party could come to Westminster on a double bicycle, a form of locomotion which the members forming the

party—the Hon. G. T. Kenyon and Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones—would probably not have enjoyed. But nobody can doubt that the Church question, rather than Home Rule, was the principal factor in the Welsh elections. In Scotland, where Liberalism was traditional and disestablishment had been promised, there was a majority for the Gladstonians of 29. In Ireland the Nationalists actually lost 5 seats, and were divided into two parties, the Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites, led by Mr Redmond and Mr Justin McCarthy respectively, the total Home Rule majority being 57. England, however, had decisively rejected Mr Gladstone's separatist proposals, baited though they were with the Newcastle Programme. One element which contributed largely to this result was Mr Gladstone's persistent refusal to define what he meant by Home Rule. The Bill of 1886 was understood to be dead and buried, especially that part of it which excluded Irish representatives from the British House of Commons. What, then, was to happen? Were the Irish members to have their own Parliament to themselves, and also to come to Westminister and interfere with the management of our affairs? On hundreds of platforms this question was asked—Mr Gladstone and his supporters were dumb. Advocacy of Home Rule was reduced by many Home Rule candidates to a perfect farce. The gentleman who opposed me in the Tonbridge Division made his final appeal to the electors to vote for Home Rule, "in order to gladden the heart of the Grand Old Man." No wonder he was defeated. The Home counties went almost solid for the Unionists; and the Radical attempt to capture London, though they gained a few seats, was a complete failure. But the great feature of the election

was the solid phalanx of Unionists returned by Birmingham and the districts in the neighbourhood. The personality of Mr Chamberlain was as powerful in his own country—the Birmingham area—as had been that of the Highland chieftains of old over the districts where they ruled. But whereas they ruled by feudal tradition and clanship, Mr Chamberlain's power was exercised through the suffrages of large masses of industrial voters, many of them the poorest of the poor, aided by thoroughly efficient and up-to-date organisation. Such a personal ascendancy over an enlightened democracy has scarcely been witnessed since the days of Pericles, when, in the words of Thucydides the government of Athens was in name a democracy, but really the personal rule of her greatest citizen; and the phenomenon was the more remarkable when it is remembered that the whole of this part of the country had been extremely Radical up to the split in 1886. If England generally was averse to Home Rule, it was especially in the Midland districts that this aversion showed itself most strongly, and it can not be doubted that Mr Chamberlain contributed more than any other man to the defeat of Mr Gladstone's projects.

Having regard to the small size and the composition of the majority, the Government decided to meet Parliament, disregarding the precedents of 1874 and 1880. The two Houses met on August 4th for one of the shortest sessions on record. Several days were spent in formal business—the re-election of the Speaker, Mr Peel, and the swearing in of members. The Queen's Speech was exceedingly brief—the business of the year having been completed before the election. The address was moved by Mr Dunbar Barton in an able speech, his selection

being prompted by the fact that he was a prominent representative of Ulster Unionism. It was seconded by Mr W. H. Cross, son of Lord Cross, who had so often held office in Conservative administrations. Then Mr Asquith, the coming man of triumphant Liberalism, moved an amendment to the effect that the Government no longer possessed the confidence of the country. He spoke in that clear, forensic style to which the House has long grown accustomed. Over this amendment the time of the House was occupied for four Parliamentary days. It was not a very interesting debate; to me it appeared a sham fight, the result of which, like that of Aldershot manœuvres, had been previously arranged. It was remarkable only for the efforts, brilliant in themselves, of Mr Balfour and Mr Chamberlain, to draw Mr Gladstone as to the details of his new Home Rule proposals. But the old Parliamentary hand would not be drawn. With unctuous phrases, capable of many interpretations, he soothed the "Anti-Parnellites," and disregarded the threats of the Parnellites, while his own party were only anxious to get the debate finished, so as to secure the sweets of office as quickly as possible. On the fourth night the House grew impatient of the constant iteration, notably the Irish section, and when Mr Chaplin rose from the Treasury Bench to wind up the debate on behalf of the Government, his speech was constantly interrupted, and at one stage Dr Tanner rushed up the Chamber and placed a glass of water on the table in front of the speaker, an act which provoked hilarious mirth among the Nationalists and Radicals, though the humour of it was not so apparent to others. About midnight the vote was taken, and resulted in the defeat of the

Government by 40 votes, the exact number of the combined Radical and Nationalist majority at the General Election. The announcement of the figures was received with great cheers and counter-cheers, shouts of "Down with Coercion," "Down with Balfour" predominating, while the Unionists replied with hearty cheers for the leader who had shown such determination as Chief Secretary, and had since so ably championed the cause in the House of Commons. The cheering was repeated and kept up for some time outside in the beautiful summer night by a great crowd, which had assembled by Palace Yard, while members slowly wended their weary way home. But, notwithstanding these outward signs of triumph, there were wiser heads, even among the majority, who felt that their victory was ephemeral, and who could not help prophesying a short and troubled life for the incoming Government.

Following on this vote the Government took the only course open to them, and at once tendered their resignations. Conservative and Unionist M.P.'s went off to the country to enjoy a well-earned holiday, and to quietly await developments. Mr Gladstone was immediately sent for by the Queen, and proceeded to form his fourth and last Ministry.

The creation of a new Government is always the occasion of keen excitement and keen disappointment to politicians of all classes. Imaginary Cabinets are constructed, places are shuffled and tossed about according to the views and wishes of every aspirant to office and eager politician, the press and the lobbies are alive with rumours. On this occasion the lobby element was absent, for the House had been prorogued. But Liberal clubs and newspaper offices displayed an activity quite unusual in August.

The Liberal Party had been in opposition for six years; since the last Gladstonian administration many new men had come to the front who had borne the burden and heat of the day in the House by their obstruction, and in the country by their rhetoric, all of whom naturally expected to reap their reward. Beyond this a new Radicalism had arisen, barely tolerant of Home Rule, but accepting it merely as the price of Mr Gladstone's leadership, a Radicalism which talked with vague enthusiasm of the triumphs of "Liberalism" in the past, and which pointed to the Newcastle Programme as its watch-word for the future. This new force fully hoped to dominate the new Government. It was doomed to bitter disappointment. Mr Gladstone preferred to adhere to his old friends, and the official Whigs of 1886 reappeared *en masse*. It was a Kimberley-Spencer-Shaw-Lefevre-Bryce administration, with Sir W. Harcourt at the Exchequer, Sir Henry Fowler at the Local Government Board, and Mr John Morley, the one convinced and steadfast Home Ruler, as Chief Secretary for Ireland. Lord Rosebery became Foreign Minister amid universal acclamations. Very few of the "old gang" were omitted, the most notable being Mr Stansfield, to whom Mr Gladstone is reported to have explained that he was too old to serve again in the Cabinet, Mr Stansfield being at the time seventy, and Mr Gladstone himself eighty-two! Of the new men the most conspicuous were Mr Asquith, who went to the Home Office; Mr Arnold Morley, son of the late Samuel Morley, who had been Chief Liberal Whip and was thoroughly "official," and who now became Postmaster - General; Mr G. W. E. Russell, a brilliant writer and speaker, who had re-entered the

House after six years' absence, and who was made Under-Secretary at the Home Office; and Sir Edward Grey, who ably represented the Foreign Office in the Lower House. But the new Radicals and the Opposition fighters were consistently ignored. No room was found for the Channings, the Pickersgills, or the Halley Stewarts of the party. Even their leader, Mr Labouchere, was left out, much to his very obvious chagrin. Nor was office allotted to Sir Charles Dilke, who had come back to the House after an interval of seven years, and whose ability was beyond question. The Whip's room was well manned. The Chief Whip was Mr Marjoribanks, an excellent choice, who, aristocrat though he was, never appeared happier than when walking arm-in-arm with John Burns or patting Joseph Arch on the back. Of his assistants the chief were Thomas Ellis, in whom Wales was honoured—the son of a Welsh farmer, who, by his brains and industry, had made his way through a brilliant Oxford career to the House of Commons; and R. K. Causton, Liberal member for Southwark, one of the most genial of men. Notwithstanding these and one or two other popular appointments of a minor character, it cannot be denied, however, that the composition of the Ministry was a grievous disappointment to the working section of the Liberal Party, who felt that their claims had been entirely neglected. The arrangement of offices was popularly put down to Mr Arnold Morley, who was supposed to have great personal influence with Mr Gladstone, and who had certainly succeeded in putting himself into the Cabinet. His popularity with the Party, never excessive, was not enhanced thereby.

The recess of 1892-1893 passed quietly enough. It

was a period of expectation. We all knew the Home Rule Bill was coming, and were prepared to oppose it, whatever shape it took; and in the meantime the Irish, in gratitude for coming events, kept remarkably quiet, rendering Mr J. Morley's task an easy one. The only notable event at home was the attempt made by several prominent agriculturists, especially Lord Winchilsea, to get some effective help given to that great industry which had languished so long, and the distress of which had lately become more acute. A conference was held in London in December, presided over by Mr J. Lowther, which was attended by landowners, farmers, estate agents, and many members of both Houses, for the purpose of putting pressure on the Government, and to "get something done" for agriculture. At this conference Lord Winchilsea brought forward a proposal for the formation of a "National Agricultural Union," which was to include landlords, farmers, and farm labourers all over the country, whose interests in the prosperity of the industry, he pointed out, were identical. The idea was taken up with avidity, and for a time the new organisation had a measure of success, but the difficulty of getting the farmers to combine with each other, and still more with the labourers, proved to be an insuperable obstacle, and the National Agricultural Union has entirely failed to play the part designed for it by its founders.

## CHAPTER III

### THE GREAT HOME RULE SESSION OF 1893

PARLIAMENT met on January 31, 1893, for the longest session recorded in recent history. As we met in January, adjourned towards the end of September, met again early in November and sat over the New Year, it was truly said that in 1893 the House sat during every month of the year except October. On the reassembly of the House the appearance of the Chamber presented a great alteration from the year before. Parties had changed sides; on the Treasury Bench now sat Mr Gladstone surrounded by his trusty lieutenants; conspicuous at the end of the bench next the gangway being Sir John Hibbert, the ever painstaking and accurate Secretary to the Treasury, who has long since exchanged Parliamentary life for an equally useful, though less exciting, public career in his own county. Facing the Government were Mr Balfour, Mr Goschen, Sir M. Hicks-Beach, and Sir E. Clarke, four debaters not to be despised, and the rest of the late Ministry who had escaped the havoc of the General Election. On the front Opposition Bench, too, were certain ex-Conservative leaders who had not figured in the late Government or in its latter stages, conspicuous among whom was Lord R. Churchill, now bearded and quite unlike the conven-

tional picture of "Randy," whose reappearance in the political arena caused much interest. In other respects, the grouping of parties in the Parliament of 1892 was peculiar. The Nationalists, always "agin' the Government," even an avowedly Home Rule Government, persisted in sitting on the Opposition side, occupying most of the space below the gangway. The front bench below the gangway was indeed frequently disputed between the Nationalists and the Ulster Unionists, headed by Colonel Saunderson; but, on the other hand, some of the Irish Nationalists honoured the Conservatives by sitting above the gangway, and we often enjoyed the presence of Messrs Clancy and W. Redmond in our midst. The Opposition side being thus fully occupied by Conservatives and Nationalists, the Liberal Unionists were driven to seek shelter on the Government side of the House, and sat on the third and fourth rows below the gangway. At the end of the third row was Mr Chamberlain, with eyeglass and orchid immaculate, and next him in line were Sir John Lubbock, Mr Courtney, Mr Heneage, Lord Wolmer, Mr Jesse Collings, Mr T. W. Russell, and many others who had been driven by Mr Gladstone's Home Rule policy out of the Liberal Party. The Liberal Unionist Organisation in the House, as elsewhere, was excellent. They consistently backed each other up. Whoever spoke was allowed to come forward to the end of the bench, and whatever he said was vociferously cheered by the other Liberal Unionists present. In fact, the worse he spoke the more he was cheered, especially by the leaders; and many a young speaker was given confidence and a chance of improvement by these means. It cannot be said that we received

similar encouragement on the Tory side. The general result in the House was that while the Government's keenest backers sat on the Opposition side, some of its keenest and ablest critics sat on its own side! Such was the topsy-turvydom introduced into the Chamber by Mr Gladstone's unhappy alliance with Parnell.

Among the Tories small groups soon showed themselves which were conspicuous through the Parliament. Immediately behind Mr Balfour sat his two trusty and loyal private secretaries in the last Parliament and in Dublin, Mr George Wyndham and Mr Hayes Fisher, both of whom, by a curious coincidence, subsequently accepted and resigned office during the continuance of a Unionist administration. On the same bench, but at the corner next the gangway, sat two figures, a great contrast to each other in size and appearance, but resembling each other in power of obstruction, Messrs Hanbury and Gibson Bowles, the former an old Parliamentarian who had not been too well treated by his Party, the latter a new addition to the Conservatives in the House, though he had been trying to get there for nearly twenty years. Near them the more active Tory spirits gathered—old hands like Mr Bartley, whose knowledge of Parliamentary procedure was second to none ; distinguished Indian officials like Sir R. Temple, who could speak for half an hour without preparation on any subject, and had only once been known to miss a division ; and numbers of younger men—Messrs Grant Lawson, Byrne, Butcher, Bucknill, who, in conjunction with Messrs Bowles and Bartley, came to be known as the “Busy B's,” through the accident of there being the same initial in so many cases.

The Queen's Speech was a portentous document, including most of the Newcastle Programme, and legislative projects enough for a generation. Among them, of course, figured the Bill "for the better government of Ireland," which, as we all knew, was bound to occupy the session. The debate on the Address followed, and lasted three weeks—a sheer waste of Parliamentary time, as all debates on the Address are. I do not propose to describe it—it followed the course invariably followed by such debates. First the commencement is delayed by some technical triviality which occupies an hour or so, and probably causes a premature division. Then two unimportant members of the Government Party appear, looking very uncomfortable and shy in tightly laced military tunics or Court dress, and move and second the Address respectively in very bad speeches. The leader of the Opposition arises and at once congratulates them on the excellence of their performance, after which he plunges into a wholesale attack on the Government policy, an attack which is tempered, however, by his unavoidable ignorance of the details of their proposals. The leader of the House responds—further congratulates the mover and seconder and mildly defends the Government, being careful, however, not to add anything to the House's knowledge of the proposed Bills, most of which are probably not yet settled. Then follows a dull general debate of three or four days, marked by the activity of the Opposition whips in urging unofficial members to speak, and equal activity on the part of the Government whips in urging their unofficial members to hold their tongues. The decks are now cleared for amendments, which are put down by private members in crowds, and some of which are discussed and may be of public interest.

Lastly, at the end of a fortnight or three weeks the Address is carried—everybody being exhausted—by a strictly party vote. In 1893 the debate on the Address followed this course to the letter. The only interesting features were the complete refusal of Mr Gladstone to indicate even the main lines of his Home Rule Bill, and the robust and manly speech of Mr Asquith in refusing to release Daly and other dynamiters then undergoing imprisonment, in reply to an amendment moved by Mr John Redmond. The Home Secretary's action and speech created a very good impression, especially on the Unionists, although it was undoubtedly displeasing to the Nationalists, and to a few of the leading champions of disorder among the Radicals.

The Address having been disposed of, the Home Rule Bill was introduced without delay—on February 13. The House was crowded to excess, and being far too small to accommodate all the members, many of the latter had to take refuge in the galleries and wherever they could get in. By the general courtesy of all parties, questions were suspended, and punctually at 3.30 Mr Gladstone arose and moved the first reading of his measure. His speech was a marvellous piece of ingenuity and eloquence. People who heard him introduce the Bill of 1886 have assured me that his present effort was not equal to the former one; but, however this may be, no one can deny that his speech produced a wonderful effect on his audience. I candidly confess that when he sat down I was a convinced Home Ruler, and felt that somehow I had been altogether on the wrong side before. But this feeling was of very short duration. Sir Edward Clarke, the clever lawyer who had been for six years Solicitor-General

under the Conservative Government, rose to reply, and in an extraordinarily able speech, the more remarkable because until Mr Gladstone spoke he could not have known the details of the Bill, pricked the bubble at once. He showed how unnecessary such a measure was, how unwise, how dangerous to the Empire, how unfair to Ulster, while he entirely exposed several of the clauses, especially the one relating to the retention of the Irish members at Westminster.

It will be remembered that in 1886 Mr Gladstone proposed that Ireland should cease to be represented in the Imperial Parliament altogether; and it was this proposal, more than any other, which caused the Liberal Unionist split and the defeat of the Bill. Now he proposed a compromise—Ireland was to have 80 members at Westminster, who, however, were only to vote on Imperial questions and questions relating to Ireland, and were to take no part in purely British affairs. The utter impracticability of this proposal, “the pop ‘em in and out clause” as it came to be called, was freely pointed out by Sir E. Clarke, who, indeed, in this one remarkable speech anticipated most of the points subsequently raised in Committee. The debate lasted several days, and at length leave was given to bring in the Bill. Like most debates on first reading, it was vague and inconclusive; what else can debates on measures not yet printed be? It showed at least, however, that the new proposals would receive as uncompromising an opposition from the Unionists as did the Bill of 1886—while the Parnellite Nationalists, as represented by Mr Redmond, expressed themselves as being much disappointed with its provisions.

The Government now proceeded to satisfy the

other groups of their composite majority by launching the various other measures of the Newcastle Programme. In quick succession came Local Veto, Employers' Liability, Parish Councils, and the Welsh Suspensory Bill. The latter was a proposal to prevent the creation of fresh vested interests in the Church in Wales, with a view to its disestablishment and disendowment. A first-rate debate occurred on its introduction by Mr Asquith. Sir J. Gorst opened the opposition, but his speech was received frigidly. What else could be expected from a man who attempted to lead the Church Party by declaring that, "after all, the Church in Wales was not an unmixed evil." But some junior members of the House, and notably Mr Vicary Gibbs, redeemed the debate on the Church side, while towards its close Lord Randolph Churchill, who, on this occasion, appeared quite to have regained his old form, roused the Unionists to the greatest pitch of enthusiasm with a splendid fighting speech fairly lashing the Grand Old Man into fury, while the Bishop of St Asaph nodded approval from the gallery. The Prime Minister responded with some warmth, but from his speech it was clear that Lord Randolph was not far wrong when he said that he was prepared to throw over even the Church in Wales in order to get votes for the Home Rule Bill. A division was taken on the first reading, which was carried by the usual party vote, after which the Bill was heard of no more during the session.

Although it was perfectly clear that there was not the faintest chance of the Government's various legislation proposals going through, there can be no doubt that tactically their introduction was sound policy. They temporarily obscured the Home Rule Bill, the

opposition to which had not yet crystallised, and they satisfied various sections of the supporters of the Government in the House and the country. The Opposition appeared to be making no headway in either. The attendance of the Unionists in the House was bad,—for some reason or other it always was bad in my experience ; and frequently the Government majority rose far above its normal figure. In the country several by-elections had taken place in consequence of the result of election petitions, and the Gladstonians had won several seats. There was nothing unusual in this ; all Governments at the very commencement of their career succeed as a rule in holding their own, the idea in the head of the average elector being to give them a chance. But the Unionist newspapers were alarmed and angry, and the leaders at once took steps to concentrate public opinion on the Home Rule Bill, and to take every opportunity of attacking the Government. The second reading had been fixed for the reassembly of the House after Easter ; but in the meantime the short recess was fully availed of, and effective platform speeches were delivered by Mr Balfour, Mr Chamberlain, and others.

The great debate itself lasted eleven days ; but, in my judgment, it proved to be the least interesting part of the whole fight. It was one protracted series of academic speeches by great men and small alike, and as an exposition of the defects and inconsistencies of the Bill was far less effective than the Committee stage which followed ; and from the Opposition point of view it was disappointing, as it revealed no split on the Government side so far as the main principle of the measure went. The second reading was carried by 43 votes. Far more interesting than the

second reading debate was the great gathering of loyal delegates from all parts of Ireland, which culminated in a remarkable demonstration in the Albert Hall two days after its passage. The delegates were hospitably entertained by members of the Unionist Party in London for several nights, and, on the night before the demonstration, a series of semi-public dinners at clubs and private houses was held, at all of which speeches were made, and great enthusiasm prevailed. I had the honour of addressing some thirty of them in the house of Mr Heaton Armstrong (now, it is curious to note, a Radical M.P.), mostly South of Ireland Unionists from Tipperary and the neighbourhood. Nor were such entertainments confined to politics only. Among Mr Armstrong's friends was Mr George Edwardes, the well-known manager of the Gaiety Theatre and other places of amusement; and after the speeches the delegates were courteously bidden to cheer up notwithstanding the second reading of the Home Rule Bill, and to "come and have one last look at *the Empire*." Next day, however, they were brought back to serious earnestness by the splendid speeches of the Archbishop of Armagh and others at the Albert Hall, and a resolution condemning the Bill was passed by 10,000 people unanimously.

The Committee stage of the Bill, destined to last a record time, even though curtailed by the gag and guillotine, was shortly begun, and every conceivable point was raised by the Opposition. The leaders led right well, especially Mr Chamberlain, whose destructive criticism of the Bill probably did more than anything else to expose it to the country; while the Hanbury-Bowles-Bartley faction were ever to the fore. Rigorous attendance was now enforced, and at

Whitsuntide the *Times* published a list giving the number of divisions each member of the Unionist Party had attended, which was somewhat unfair to individuals, as no account was taken of "pairs"; but the effect was distinctly good. Thus we went on in the hottest of summers, day by day, week by week, month by month, discussing interminably the details of the Home Rule Bill. The debates, however, were generally fresh; points of great constitutional importance were constantly arising, and scenes were not infrequent. One which I particularly remember arose through Lord Cranborne, always impetuous, remarking on the mention of Mr Davitt's name as an example of an old revolutionary who had been won over to the cause of order, that he had been a "murderer." Immediately some half-dozen excited Nationalists sprang to their feet, and a wild scene ensued. Lord Cranborne was called upon to withdraw, which he did immediately, explaining that his remark was not intended for the ear of the House, but adding "that it was true nevertheless!"

On all such occasions the Opposition were greatly assisted by the conduct of the Chairman, Mr Mellor, a charming man, but devoid of authority, and apparently not well versed in the rules or procedure of the House. The Chairman literally seemed to delight in and to encourage the Busy B's and other irregulars on the Opposition side; but a very different state of affairs prevailed when his place was temporarily taken by Sir Julian Goldsmid, one of the Deputy-Chairmen, who put down obstruction with draconian severity. Of course nobody sat through all these debates, and the terrace was greatly in vogue, and was usually thronged with members and members' wives. In fact it became, in 1893, the most fashionable lounge in

London. The presence of so many members there was occasionally the cause of chaff on the part of passengers on penny steamers passing by, who, on one occasion, when a kind of aquatic display was in process, and the terrace was more thronged than usual, called out to them "to go in and look after the Home Rule Bill."

The most important debate of all took place on Clause 9, on the retention of the Irish members. It will be remembered that the Bill proposed to reduce the Irish representation at Westminster from 103 to 80, and to allow them to take part in Imperial questions only. The utter impracticability of the latter proposal had been exposed over and over again, while the Irish strongly objected to the reduction of the number. Mr Redmond moved an amendment to leave matters as they were, which was supported by Mr Balfour, Mr Chamberlain, and the whole Opposition. At one moment it looked as if the Government would be defeated. But Mr Sexton and the Anti-Parnellites came to their rescue, and the amendment was defeated by 14 votes. Then Mr Gladstone announced his intention to abandon the plan of confining the Irish members to participation in Imperial questions, thus leaving them in fact in the same position as the members for England, Scotland, and Wales. The result would have been that the Irish would have managed their own affairs in their own Parliament, and could also interfere in the management of our affairs at Westminster, while we should have been excluded altogether from any voice in their affairs. This intolerable proposition was too much even for some of Mr Gladstone's own followers. Dr Wallace, Member for Edinburgh, who had once been a prominent preacher in the Scottish Church,

denounced it in a most humorous speech. He began by quoting a speech of Mr Gladstone, in which he had said that he would be "no party to any arrangement by which, after Ireland had a domestic Legislature of her own, Irishmen should sit here to manage British affairs"; and then proceeded, "I feel something like the disciple of a venerated master who has been guided by him over a famous historic bridge, crowded with numerous and disappointed transmigrants, to acquire at the end of our journey the enlightened principle that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal to one another. I am overjoyed and shout 'Eureka,' and vow eternal gratitude to my venerated master. But when in a few days he comes and tells me that he has been round about among his friends, and finds that there is a general feeling that these angles *ought not to be* equal, and that accordingly he is going to bow to that general feeling, I ask you, Mr Mellor, what am I to do?" Then, turning round and casting a cynical glance at the crowded benches of the Liberal Party, he proceeded, "Not being possessed of the *flexibility* or even the *fluidity* of the intelligence of so many of my co-disciples, which makes them not only equal to one another, *but equal to anything*, I feel that, having got a conviction, I do not see how I can unget it." Tumultuous applause and laughter greeted this passage, the Irish Nationalists and many Liberals enjoying the exquisite humour, though sour looks were not absent from the Treasury Bench and from the faces of some of the more austere followers of the Prime Minister. Mr Balfour followed in one of his happiest efforts, in which he pointed out how this change of front on the part of the Government had utterly destroyed the whole aim and object of the Bill, and made it illogical

and ridiculous, removing the chief reason for which it had been advocated in England, viz., to get rid of the obstruction of British measures by the Irish Nationalists in the House of Commons ; and he concluded by saying that he refrained from attacking the Government because they were “hardly worth attacking”—a remark which greatly nettled the Grand Old Man. For all this the amendment was carried by a majority of 27, and the clause as amended was added to the Bill.

This debate, however, was the turning-point in the situation. Up to then the Government seemed like carrying their measure, and the debates had an air of reality about them. Now it was felt on all sides that we were, to use a phrase which soon became almost classical, “ploughing the sands of the sea-shore.” Both parties realised that after what had occurred, the Lords would certainly throw out the Bill on second reading, and that they would be fully justified in so doing. No such proposal as that now contained in the measure had ever been before the country, and the obvious duty of any second chamber is to submit to the country’s decision propositions which a chance majority may rush through the Lower House without any mandate. This was the more imperative, having regard to the grave constitutional changes involved. Unionists therefore fought on, knowing that though beaten by party discipline in the Commons they would win in the Lords. Liberals, many of whom were heartily sick of the Bill, also fought on in order, as they openly said in the lobbies, to pass something in the House of Commons, knowing that the something would never become law. The unreality of the situation was intensified by the automatic operation of

the guillotine, which left whole clauses undebated. Still, however, we went on week after week discussing and dividing, the "heat" of the debates often exceeding that of the temperature outside. Scenes became more frequent—and at last culminated in the disgraceful episode which occurred on July 28. It was the last day allotted to the Committee stage—at 10 o'clock the guillotine would fall on the remaining clauses. Two minutes before that time Mr Chamberlain was speaking, and was commenting on the slavish adulation of Mr Gladstone by his followers who were prepared to follow him first in one direction and then in directly the opposite. "If the Prime Minister says it is black, they say it is good; if white, they say it is better. It is always the voice of a god. Never, since the time of Herod had there been such slavish adulation." Immediately an uproar arose among the Nationalists, and not another word could the speaker utter. From all quarters of the Opposition came cries of "Judas! Judas!" the insulting nickname which the Irish Party and their Radical allies applied to Mr Chamberlain. Such was the noise, that, when Mr Mellor rose at 10 to put the question, nothing could be heard; his voice was completely drowned by "Judas! Judas!" from one party, and "Order! Order!" from the other. Meanwhile Mr Vicary Gibbs was seen rising with his hat on from the Conservative benches, and trying to catch Mr Mellor's eye, so as to put a point of order, but all to no purpose; and all the time members retained their seats and refused to go out into the division lobbies. Suddenly Mr Logan, the author of the election-card already mentioned, and who had proved to be a somewhat aggressive Radical, rushed across from the Liberal

benches and seated himself on the front Opposition Bench, in the place usually occupied by Mr Balfour, who was absent, and began to argue in loud tones with Mr Carson. What his object was nobody could divine; but his intrusion was greatly resented by the Conservatives, and Mr Hayes Fisher, sitting as usual just behind Mr Balfour's accustomed place, leaned forward and pushed him on to the floor. This was the signal for a general fight, the Irish Nationalists rose almost as one man, and, headed by Mr Healy, rushed across the gangway towards the Conservatives, specially signalling out Colonel Saunderson for attack. The Colonel was equal to the emergency, taking off his coat he hit about valiantly and kept his assailants at bay. Three or four other scuffles were taking place simultaneously in other parts of the Chamber: but members were packed so closely together that they could hardly get at each other, and no real damage was done. Meanwhile the most pitiable sight was Mr Gladstone standing in front of the Treasury Bench as pale as a sheet, feeling bitterly the degradation of the House of Commons, while opposite him was Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, wildly gesticulating, and shouting, "This is all your fault." How long this terrible scene would have continued nobody can tell, for passions were rising and the Chairman had long since lost all control, but fortunately somebody called for the Speaker, who shortly appeared. His presence acted like magic. The disturbance ceased at once. Mr Mellor made such an explanation as he could of what had occurred, and in a few minutes the House proceeded with its divisions, and the Committee stage of the Bill was brought to a close.

Looking back on this scene, the most disgraceful

I ever witnessed in the House, it is not easy to properly apportion the blame. It was the result of the long pent-up feelings produced by Mr Gladstone's attempt to force so great a revolutionary change as Home Rule through the House by means of the gag ; and in this respect Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett was not far from the mark in telling Mr Gladstone that it was his fault, however inappropriate his action at the time may have been. It was rendered possible, moreover, by the complete laxity of debate allowed by the Chairman, and his want of proper control over members, which had emboldened the Irish members to continually interrupt proceedings, and to shout opprobrious nicknames at their opponents, in which they were followed by those of the Liberal Party whose manners had been corrupted by association with them. Mr Logan's ill-mannered intrusion into Mr Balfour's seat can in no way be condoned, and Mr Hayes Fisher was guilty of an error of judgment, very pardonable under the circumstances, in using force against him. The calling for the Speaker was an inspiration, and put an end to what might have been an even more disgraceful riot. Never did Mr Peel's ascendancy shine out more brilliantly than on that night. A comic element was given to the incident by the débris found by the attendants on the scene of the fight. They consisted of a broken arm of a bench, some buttons, several shirt studs, and a false tooth. So ended the Committee stage of the Home Rule Bill of 1893.

After a short interval devoted to the ordinary business of the nation, the Home Rule Bill was resumed on Report. The Report stage of Bills is generally a great opportunity for wasting Parlia-

mentary time, as, owing to the rules of procedure, every amendment which has been rejected in Committee can be moved again on Report. On the present occasion, however, it was found possible to move several amendments for which time had not been given in Committee through the guillotine; and some interesting discussions took place, which, however, were brought to a close by a second application of the guillotine. On September 1 the Third Reading stage was reached, and the rejection of the Bill was moved by that professor of austere and superior political wisdom, Mr Leonard Courtney, in an able speech. The debate was remarkable only for Redmond's declaration that "the word provisional was stamped in red ink on every page," a true application of Parnellite doctrine which is worthy of the consideration of all who think that by partial Home Rule or "devolution" the Irish question can be settled. The third reading was carried by 34 votes the same day after the Bill had occupied eighty-two days in the House of Commons, a period which would have been much greater but for the closure. The same night it was received in the House of Lords. A few days later the second reading was entered upon there, and a debate of very high order ensued, which ended, as is well known, in the rejection of the measure by 419 votes to 41.

A remarkable situation now arose. The House of Lords with its "permanent Tory majority" had long been an object of aversion to the Radical Party, indeed its "ending or mending" had been one of the items of the Newcastle Programme. What, then, would the Radical Party, what would the Liberal Government, do, now that it had thrown out the principal measure of the session, carried through the

House of Commons so soon after a General Election? They did nothing. They took it "lying down." Circumstances were not propitious. The House of Lords was not popular with the Radicals, but the Home Rule Bill was even less popular with the people. This was the generally accepted view; and it was further evidenced by the course of recent by-elections. The Unionists had just won, both at Linlithgow and at Hereford. The circumstances at the latter were noticeable; Mr Grenfell, the Liberal member, had resigned chiefly because he could not assent to the *volte-face* of the Government on the question of the retention of the Irish members; and the election which followed resulted in the return of the Unionist candidate, Mr Radcliffe Cooke, an able man, who subsequently became famous for the equal fervour with which he advocated the making of cider and the maintenance of the Protestant religion. The Government, therefore, accepted the rejection of the Bill by the Lords, and proceeded to other business. No attempt was ever made to demonstrate against the Upper House in the country. When the verdict of history comes to be written it will, I think, be universally admitted that in summarily dismissing the Home Rule Bill the Lords acted strictly within their constitutional rights, and correctly interpreted the feeling of the country.

In the House of Commons Mr Gladstone stated that the business of supply would now be concluded as quickly as possible, after which an adjournment would take place till November 2, when Parliament would meet again for an autumn session, in which the Employers' Liability Bill and the Parish Councils Bill would be taken. These two measures had been selected from the great mass of proposals included in

the Queen's Speech as being most likely to pass, thus saving the session from the charge of barrenness. No doubt Mr Gladstone hoped that by proceeding with some of the items of the Newcastle Programme the Government might regain their popularity, and obtain later on a greater majority to be used to carry Home Rule; but most of his followers, with truer insight, saw in this plan the practical abandonment of Home Rule, and the freeing of the party from a terrible incubus. The Unionists, having accomplished their great purpose, were content to submit to the arrangement; but a few of the more active, led by Messrs Hanbury and Bartley and the other guerilla chiefs, determined that the estimates should not be rushed through, even though adequate discussion meant the curtailment of the holidays. They set to work accordingly with a zeal which was equalled only by the thinness of the attendance, the majority of members having already departed. At length, on September 22, the end came, and the House of Commons adjourned for its brief holiday.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AUTUMN SESSION OF 1893

PARLIAMENT reassembled on November 2, and immediately fell to work to discuss the second reading of the Parish Councils Bill. The measure had undoubtedly much to recommend it, and completed the scheme of British Local Government begun in 1888 by the establishment of County Councils by the Conservative Government of the day, and it had been agreed that in its main principle it was to be regarded as "non-contentious"; but anxious as members of all sides professed themselves to be to see it pass, they seemed to be equally anxious to amend it in detail, and it was clear from the first that the debates would be prolonged. The second reading debate occupied four nights, and the Government was strongly urged by the Opposition to divide the Bill into two parts and to proceed with Parish Councils, leaving the far more difficult question of District Councils and the reform of the Boards of Guardians to another year. This, however, Mr Fowler, on behalf of the Government, refused to do, and the second reading was carried without a division.

The Government then proceeded to deal with the Employers' Liability Bill, which had already passed through a Standing Committee and awaited its

Report stage. Immediately a bitter controversy arose. The chief object of the measure was to abolish the doctrine of common employment, by which an employer was not liable for an accident caused to one of his men by the fault of another of his employees, but it also forbade contracting out in its provisions for the future. This tyrannical proposal emanated from the Trades Unions, who were bitterly opposed to the Mutual Insurance Societies which had been established in many great businesses between the masters and the men, as tending to establish too friendly relations and to minimise the Unions' power; and it is an early example of the policy of surrender to the Trades Unions, which has since become so marked a feature of modern Liberalism. A new clause was moved by Mr Walter McLaren, a most unimpeachable Radical, permitting contracting out subject to stringent conditions as to contributions by the masters to an insurance fund, and was supported by him in an excellent speech, in which he showed the great advantages which had accrued to the men through the Mutual Insurance schemes of the London and North-Western and other great railways, all of which he showed would be destroyed if the Government clause was carried. But the Government proved obdurate. On a division, Mr McLaren's clause was defeated by only 19 votes, and it would have been carried but for the slackness of the Unionists, many of whom were absent unpaired. A few days later the third reading was taken, and a remarkable speech was delivered by Mr Chamberlain. He cordially supported the principle of contracting out, and quoted other examples of successful mutual societies which would be destroyed if the Bill passed. But he went

much further in general criticism of the measure, and advocated instead of an Employers' Liability Bill, under which the liability of the employer would have to be proved in each case before compensation for accident could be obtained, a measure of general compensation for all accidents occurring in the course of employment, with permission to contract out under suitable conditions. The speech is interesting now as anticipating the Workmen's Compensation Act subsequently carried by the Unionist Government, of which Mr Chamberlain was a member. Mr Asquith, on behalf of the Liberal Government, expressed himself as opposed to Mr Chamberlain's proposition, and the Bill was sent up to the Lords. We may anticipate events a little, and conclude its history by saying that there a contracting-out clause was inserted on the motion of Lord Dudley, and that in supporting it Lord Salisbury expressed himself as favourable to the principle of universal compensation suggested by Mr Chamberlain in the Lower House. A collision between the two Houses ensued, and after the measure had been bandied about between them several times the Government finally dropped it, thus clearly showing that they were more eager to inflame the passions of the people against the Lords than to benefit the working men whose friends they professed to be. The attempt to raise a cry, however, against the Upper House proved as great a failure on the present occasion as it did on the rejection of the Home Rule Bill.

Meanwhile, in the Commons the Committee stage of the Parish Councils Bill was lumbering along, and notwithstanding the ability and fairness of Mr Fowler, who was in charge of the Bill, the progress was exceedingly slow. A long, fierce wrangle

occurred over Clause 13, which handed over the control of certain local charities to the Parish Councils, and caused considerable alarm to churchmen, who saw in it the partial disestablishment of the vicar and churchwardens, and the alienation of gifts which had an undoubted Church origin. It was to combat these particular proposals in the first instance, that an organisation was formed which later on became known as the "Church Party," and which consisted of a number of earnest churchmen, who were aware that the Liberal Government depended largely in the House, and still more in the country, on the support of aggressive political nonconformity, and who, under the title of the Church Parliamentary Committee, met together from time to time to consider the best means of organising the protection of Church interests. The most prominent leaders of the new movement were three ex-Ministers, Sir M. Hicks-Beach, Mr E. Stanhope, and Sir Richard Webster; while among the more active spirits were Sir Francis Powell, a most painstaking Parliamentarian, who had devoted years to the cause of the Church; Mr Talbot, one of the members for the University of Oxford; Lord Cranborne, who inherited the Cecil devotion to the Established Church; Lord Wolmer, with whom again keen churchmanship was innate; and Mr Tomlinson. The first two honorary secretaries of the Committee were Lord Wolmer and myself. The Church Committee at once set to work to amend the Charity clauses of the Parish Councils Bill, and met with considerable success, though they cannot be said to have shortened the discussions. In fact, partly owing to the loquacity of churchmen, and partly because the Government threw over Mr Fowler, the

Minister in charge of the Bill, and accepted an amendment moved by Mr Cobb, an independent Radical, Clause 13 was debated for a whole week, a Saturday sitting included. When the Poor Law clauses were reached the discussions became even longer, and it began to be very doubtful whether the Government could pass the Bill at all, which was the more remarkable because all parties professed themselves anxious to see it passed. At last, however, just before Christmas a compromise was effected: a mysterious negotiation between the two front benches took place "behind the Speaker's chair": and in return for certain concessions of very minor importance the Opposition leaders agreed to allow the remaining stages to go through practically without discussion. Why this bargain had been made none of us who fought on the back benches could understand, and we felt that we had been given away by our leaders, a feeling to which every keen Parliamentarian soon grows accustomed. It is only fair to add that the Radical free lances felt equally aggrieved and were loud in their protests, so that perhaps the leaders on both sides were not so far wrong after all.

In the meantime, however, Christmas had come and gone—wary legislators having contented themselves with a brief holiday of five days—and we had reached the New Year. It was a little confusing in January 1894 to find ourselves still in 1893 for Parliamentary purposes; but though we had reached another year we still had the same old session. A few days before Christmas a very interesting debate took place on the state of the navy, it being generally felt that the Government, as Liberal governments generally do, were sacrificing the efficiency of the Service to

economy, and that the shipbuilding programme was altogether inadequate, having regard to the great activity prevailing in French and Russian yards. Lord George Hamilton moved the resolution in a very able speech ; but the debate was chiefly remarkable for the intervention of Sir William Harcourt, who lectured the Opposition in his most approved style, and assured the House that he had the authority of the Sea Lords for saying that the navy was in the most satisfactory condition. Two days later he rose in his place and asked permission to withdraw this statement, explaining that the Sea Lords only meant that the shipbuilding programme of the existing year, so far as battleships were concerned, was satisfactory. It was understood that the Sea Lords had threatened to resign in a body unless this explanation were given. This discussion was amply justified by results ; it forced the hand of the Radical Government and prevented their sacrificing the navy, whatever else they did, and for the rest of their time in office their shipbuilding programme was well maintained. Critics of the House of Commons often speak slightly of "Government by talk"—in this case at all events the talk led up to important action, which would not have occurred without it. On January 12 the Parish Councils Bill was read a third time, and the House of Commons adjourned for a short holiday while the Bill was being discussed by the Upper House. The Lords were in a highly critical mood, Local Government being a matter in which they were well versed, and Lord Salisbury freely amended those clauses which dealt with charities, allotments, and the administration of the poor laws, though not supported altogether by the Duke of Devonshire and

the Liberal Unionists. We met again to consider the Lords' amendments in the middle of February, by which time the new session would, under ordinary circumstances, have been well under way; but in the meantime an event occurred of far greater importance than the details of the Parish Councils Bill or the fate of the Employers' Liability Bill. On the last day of January a statement appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* to the effect that Mr Gladstone intended to resign immediately. The story was promptly denied by the Liberal press, but an official contradiction sent from Biarritz by Sir Algernon West was so skilfully worded as to create the impression that it was true all the same.

When the House of Commons met, Mr Gladstone was in his place, and he actually moved the resolution which destroyed the Employers' Liability Bill, much to the chagrin of many of his party. It was evident, however, that he was ill at ease, and, though nothing was publicly stated, it was clear that a change was coming. Cabinet councils were being held with unusual frequency, and there had been journeys to and from Windsor, not only by Mr Gladstone but also by Lord Rosebery. The Parish Councils Bill still remained unsettled; it had been tossed about like a shuttlecock between the two Houses several times, and the Church Committee had had the chance, which they had not neglected, of restating more than once their objections to the Charity Clause. Now the points of difference had been narrowed down to two merely, viz., whether 200 or 300 inhabitants should entitle a parish to have a council of its own, and whether the decision of what constituted an Ecclesiastical Charity should be left to the Charity Commissioners. It was hardly

credible that the Government would sacrifice the Bill, as they had the Employers' Liability Bill, on account of such trumpery differences, yet the story got about that this was what they intended to do, and that Mr Gladstone in doing it would take the opportunity of announcing his resignation. The debate was fixed for March 1, and by a curious coincidence I happened to meet one of the Liberal Whips in the Park that morning, who assured me that there was not one word of truth in the rumour that Mr Gladstone even contemplated resignation! When the House met it was crammed, and a vast crowd assembled in the lobbies. Mr Gladstone rose and accepted the Lords' amendments under protest, thinking the time had come for putting an end to "the sending, the resending, and the again resending" of the Bill to the Upper House, and being unwilling at the same time to sacrifice the whole work of the session. The rest of his speech was one long threatening of the House of Lords for standing in the way of the people; but no allusion whatever was made to his personal position. Everybody, however, felt that it was his last speech, and the remark was freely made that he who had begun his Parliamentary career as the rising hope of the Tory Party had ended it by pointing the way to the most Radical constitutional change yet made. The debate which followed was remarkable for another and a very sad circumstance, a speech from Lord Randolph Churchill, which displayed that terrible deterioration both of his mental grasp and his power of utterance which had been noticeable for some months past, to such an extent, indeed, that he had utterly lost the ear of the House, and when he rose on the present occasion many members walked out. I overheard Mr

Hanbury, who was sitting in front of me, remark to his next door neighbour, "This is the saddest thing I remember"—as indeed it was. Only a year ago the remark, "Randolph is up," filled the Chamber like magic, and left the lobbies and libraries empty—now the reverse was the case. Mr Gladstone's motion was of course accepted, and the House was prorogued, the long fourteen months' session having at last been brought to a close. Two days later Mr Gladstone resigned, and Lord Rosebery was called by the Queen to fill the vacant place.

It would be presumptuous for me to attempt to form any kind of estimate of Mr Gladstone's life and work in the House of Commons. This has been recently done by Mr Morley, and will no doubt be done again, and Mr Gladstone, like every other public man, will be judged largely according to the political sympathies of each individual. For my part I only saw him at the close of his career, when his star had long passed its zenith. While he remained in the House he was, beyond all question, by far the greatest figure there. He was like one of the ancient Greek heroes, who had somehow survived from a past and altogether different age, and other men looked small beside him. That he had made a colossal error in adopting Home Rule was generally felt on all sides; that his motives in doing so were not above suspicion was the belief of most members of the Unionist Party. We also regarded him as a source of public danger—a man who might adopt and carry any ruinous policy, first persuading himself of its justice, and then, by his matchless eloquence, persuading the country. But however much we might disapprove of and distrust his public acts, he would indeed have been a poor, dull, and prejudiced

creature who did not feel the touch of his marvellous personality. His earnestness, his vigour, his fiery words, his apparent resolve to do the right all the world over, his graceful gestures, so rare in English speakers, could not fail to appeal to all. Then there was his marvellous old-world courtesy, to all alike, even to the youngest member on the opposite side, so different to the ways of the modern politician. I remember that he sat through my maiden speech, which is more than any of my own leaders did. Lastly, if in his political principles he had appeared shifty and inconsistent, there was one element in his character which was as steadfast as a rock—his churchmanship. If ever there was a devoted son of the Church of England, it was Mr Gladstone. Indeed I have always believed that the chief reason which caused his resignation at this particular moment—apart from his great age and growing infirmities—was his aversion to the policy of Welsh Disestablishment, which the Government was pledged to deal with immediately. He had been willing to put off the Welsh agitators with a Suspensory Bill, which he knew could not pass—he was not willing to bring in a measure of disestablishment and disendowment. In other respects he was, of course, quite out of sympathy with his party and his Government. He had lived his last ten years to carry Home Rule; they were only anxious to bury it, and to proceed to the other items of the Newcastle Programme. But they found the task more difficult than they expected; and the incubus of Home Rule remained a legacy from Mr Gladstone for eleven more weary years.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ROSEBERY MINISTRY AND THE SESSION OF 1894

As has been already stated, the new Prime Minister was Lord Rosebery, who thus succeeded Mr Gladstone as leader of the Liberal Party. His accession appears to have been acquiesced in by his colleagues in the Cabinet, and the changes consequent upon his elevation were few. Lord Kimberley, a very safe and very unimaginative Whig, became Foreign Secretary. Mr Fowler, who had greatly distinguished himself at the Local Government Board by his clearness of statement and fairness of vision, succeeded him at the India Office, while Mr Shaw-Lefevre, a very dull professor of philosophic Radicalism, took charge of Local Government, and Mr Herbert Gladstone became First Commissioner of Works. The ministerial rearrangements would have ended here, but for an event which synchronised with Mr Gladstone's retirement—the death of Lord Tweedmouth, which caused Mr Majoribanks, the chief Whip, to go to the Upper House. His loss was irreparable, and it is doubtful whether it did not contribute more to the overthrow of the Liberal Party in the Commons even than the resignation of Mr Gladstone. He was succeeded by Mr Thomas Ellis, the able and popular young Welshman, who, however, did not possess either the station or qual-

fications to make a good chief Whip. Mr Ellis ought to have been put into the Cabinet, or at least given an important under-secretaryship.

The fact that the new leader of the Radical Party was a Peer, and that he had succeeded to the position just when Mr Gladstone had been declaiming against the House of Lords, and had suggested that its "mending or ending" should be the chief object of Liberal policy in future, caused great amusement in the country, especially in Unionist circles. Nor did it go unchallenged among the Radicals. Immediately before the prorogation a deputation, headed by Mr Labouchere, had waited on Mr Marjoribanks, urging that the new Prime Minister should be in the Commons; but their request came too late, as Lord Rosebery had already been sent for by Her Majesty. The fact that he was in the Lords was not the only objection to the appointment of Lord Rosebery. In the opinion of the great majority of members of both Houses and both parties, his claims to promotion could not compare with those of Sir William Harcourt. The doughty Chancellor of the Exchequer was a prominent Liberal leader long before Lord Rosebery had entered politics at all. Since the Home Rule split he had been the main-stay, after Mr Gladstone, of the Liberal Party both in the House of Commons and the country. In the latter he was a great figure, and his thumping platform oratory was beloved of every Radical. In the House his speeches were distinctly ponderous, and his humour, exquisite as it often was, was a little bit too obviously prepared. He was, however, a past-master of Parliamentary procedure, and was essentially a great House of Commons man. In fact, after Mr Gladstone's retirement, he was the

greatest personality in the House of Commons. It is true that he was supposed not to be overburdened with principle, and he executed a quick change on the Home Rule question in 1886 which was the envy of many. But could this be a disqualification among the Liberal leaders in 1894? For my part, I have always held that Sir William Harcourt had every right to expect the Premiership when Mr Gladstone retired, and that he was very badly treated in being passed over.

Such acts of political injustice always bear their fruit, and the Liberal Party suffered grievously in the present instance. From the moment of Lord Rosebery's accession it was rent in twain, and two hostile groups appeared—the Roseberyites and the Harcourtites. However loyal the two men might have been to each other—and rumour says that there was no excess of loyalty on either side—there was no stopping the followers. There never is in such cases. There was, moreover, a divergence of political opinion quite sufficient to justify the split. Sir William Harcourt was pre-eminently a Little Englishman. Foreign policy and colonial relations were nothing to him: he was the champion of the mid-Victorian Radical view, that so long as we had free imports and kept out of war all would be well in this most happy of countries. He did not in the least see danger in Russian aggression or in the growth of German Imperialism—nor did he appreciate the movement among our colonies towards closer relations with each other and with the mother country—in fact, he probably regarded the colonies as more of a nuisance than anything else. For the rest he was imbued with the impracticable cosmopolitan goodwill of Mr Gladstone, which caused him

inevitably to prefer the enemies of this country to its friends. Lord Rosebery, on the other hand, was a would-be Imperialist. He was always pecking at Imperialism, though he never swallowed it. His followers, therefore, were a sort of bastard Imperialists, who came to be known as "Lib. Imps," or "Limps," while Sir William was the fugleman of the whole-hearted Little Englanders, who were, and still are, the real backbone of English Radicalism. Thus the new Government was divided against itself from the beginning. Lord Rosebery attended to foreign politics, Sir William Harcourt to finance. Lord Rosebery thought it most important to conciliate the Welsh Party by promising disestablishment; Sir William Harcourt insisted on first meeting the clamours of English Radicals by a democratic budget. Lord Rosebery said the greatest question before the country was that of the House of Lords; Sir William Harcourt replied by pushing forward Temperance legislation. The only thing on which they both agreed was the necessity of dropping Home Rule, and yet keeping the Irish members in tow. Thus they both prepared division and disaster for their party; which did not recover from them till after both had retired, when a new leader—Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman—was discovered, who combined all the divergencies of the Liberal Party in his own marvellous personality.

The abnormally long session of 1903 was followed by an abnormally short prorogation, which lasted exactly one week. Parliament met on March 12, when the new Government made an exceedingly bad start. Speaking on the Address in the Lords, Lord Rosebery said that before Home Rule could be carried, "England as the predominant partner would

have to be convinced of its justice." The Irish were immediately up in arms ; the Prime Minister had to be explained away the next day in the House of Commons by Mr Morley, who did not, however, succeed in clarifying the situation, which was rendered the more obscure by the omission of any reference to Home Rule in the Queen's Speech. This document was indeed a mere rehash of the Newcastle Programme, containing, as usual, legislative projects sufficient to occupy a lifetime, of which the first mentioned were the Abolition of Plural Voting, Welsh Disestablishment, and an Evicted Tenants Bill, obviously brought forward to keep the Nationalists in attendance. Mr Redmond attacked Lord Rosebery and the Government roundly, and was followed by Mr Chamberlain in one of his most scathing speeches. But worse was to follow. Mr Labouchere was dissatisfied that no reference had been made to the iniquities of the House of Lords, and he thereupon moved an amendment to the Address, praying that the veto of the Upper House on legislation should be abolished, which Sir William Harcourt, on behalf of the Government, refused to accept. Immediately he sat down the division was taken, and to the astonishment of everybody, in the middle of the dinner hour, and in a very thin House, the Government were defeated by two votes. The confusion and excitement were intense, but Mr Balfour came to the rescue of the Government by moving the adjournment. Thus on the second day of its Parliamentary existence the Government of Lord Rosebery was defeated in the House of Commons on the Address.

Such a defeat under ordinary circumstances would mean resignation, but it could not do so now, for all

the Unionists present had voted with the Government against Mr Labouchere's amendment, which was supported by 147 Radical and Irish members. The logical course, indeed, would have been for Lord Rosebery to have resigned, and for Mr Labouchere to have formed a new administration. The Government, however, decided to eat humble pie and to continue. The next day Sir William Harcourt announced, amid much Unionist laughter, that the Government would vote against the old Address as amended, and would then bring in a new Address with the obnoxious words left out. This course was adopted, with the concurrence of the Unionists; and thus we witnessed a Government voting against its own Address to the Crown, and the champions of the campaign against the Lords supporting the continuance of the unrestricted veto of the Upper House.

The Government now proceeded to introduce their many Bills, an absolute waste of time, as not one of them had the slightest chance of passing. For Scotland they proposed a Scotch Grand Committee, a sort of feeler towards Home Rule north of the Tweed. For Wales, a fully fledged Disestablishment Bill (no longer a mere Suspensory Bill) was brought in by Mr Asquith, and debated for two nights, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and Mr Balfour being the principal Opposition speakers. The first reading was agreed to. Ireland was to be pacified by the Evicted Tenants Bill, which proposed to reinstate them after inquiry, whether the landlords were willing to receive them back or not. Then for the whole country there was the so-called Registration Bill, which proposed to reduce the residential qualification to three months, to abolish plural voting, and to cause all elections to be held on the same day, but

from which Redistribution was carefully omitted. None of these measures, however, could compare in practical importance with the Budget which Sir William Harcourt introduced immediately after Easter, determined that if he could not be Prime Minister he would at least leave his mark on the financial arrangements of the country. In order to meet a large estimated deficit, caused chiefly by the increase in the shipbuilding vote which had resulted from the debate in the previous session, Sir William proposed to add a penny to the income tax, to increase the duties on beer and spirits, and to revolutionise the system of death duties. The last named had long been marked out for amendment, Lord Randolph Churchill having proposed to deal with them in his sketch Budget for 1887—as mentioned by Mr Winston Churchill in his biography. The method adopted by Sir William, however, was calculated to arouse the greatest antagonism, firstly because it made real property pay in the same proportion as personal property, even though the burden of local taxation continued to fall on it exclusively, personal property being exempt; secondly, because, by the institution of the Estate Duty, the Government taxed property passing at death as a whole without paying any regard to what amount each heir or successor actually received, so that the residuary legatee of an estate might receive a very small sum and yet pay an enormous tax. This result was accentuated by the fact that the tax was to be levied on a graduated scale varying from 1 per cent. in the case of estates of less than £500, to 8 per cent. in the case of estates of over £1,000,000—which meant that a man who received only a few thousands might be called upon to pay on the highest scale, because the aggregate value

of the estate when it passed was more than £1,000,000. It is curious to note that Lord Randolph Churchill in 1886 had foreseen this injustice, and decided in his Budget to levy the death duties on the amounts received by the successor, rather than on the amount left by the deceased. There were many other objections in detail—the result being that the landed interest, the “trade,” and the Unionist Party generally, combined to offer a most strenuous opposition to Sir W. Harcourt's proposals.

The rejection of the second reading of the Finance Bill, a motion not often made, was proposed by Mr Grant Lawson, a new member, who had already made considerable mark in the House. He was backed up by the whole force of the official Opposition, Mr Balfour and Mr Goschen both taking part in the debate, which lasted three days. On the last night there was considerable excitement in the House—the feeling being abroad that a crisis was imminent, and that the Government might be out. When the division was taken it was found that they had a majority of 14—not a very large margin wherewith to carry so great a change, but quite sufficient, and as their majorities went then, quite respectable. The next day the House adjourned for the Whitsuntide holiday.

And now followed one of the most remarkable fights I ever witnessed in the House. For nearly five weeks after the resumption of business, the Committee stage of the Bill was taken *de die in diem*. The measure bristled with technicalities, and afforded endless scope for amendment, which was taken advantage of to the full by the Bartleys, Bowles, Butchers, and other Busy B's of the Opposition, with the full concurrence and support

of the Front Bench. But Sir William Harcourt was undismayed. With dogged perseverance, and often with very small majorities, he piloted his Bill through. Never once did he apply the closure, though frequently pressed to do so by his supporters. At length on July 2, the Committee stage was ended, and six more nights were occupied on Report. On July 17 the third reading was carried by 20 votes and the Bill sent to the Lords, where, being a money bill, it passed without much trouble. Sir William Harcourt's death duties, unpopular as they were and are, have remained practically unchanged ever since, and have proved, year after year, to be the salvation of successive Chancellors of the Exchequer. Whatever else we may think of Sir William Harcourt, we cannot help admiring the marvellous Parliamentary ability and tenacity which he displayed in passing his Budget of 1894.

With the passage of the Budget, the session was to all intents and purposes over, though it actually dragged on till nearly the end of August. The Evicted Tenants Bill was guillotined through the Commons only to be summarily ejected by the Lords. One or two other measures of minor importance were allowed to pass, while the important Bills, such as Welsh Disestablishment and Registration, were dropped. On the whole, however, the Government had weathered the storm marvellously well. Notwithstanding Lord Rosebery's early mistakes, notwithstanding the absurd fiasco of the Address, notwithstanding also the smallness of their majority and its precarious character, they had lived through the session not without credit, and had carried one measure of first-rate importance. Which results

must in justice be attributed to the splendid House of Commons leadership of Sir William Harcourt.

Two other political events may be noticed in connection with the session of 1894. Very serious alarm was felt by members of the Church of England at the introduction of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, and Archbishop Benson determined to take effective steps to organise resistance to it. A body called the Church Defence Institution had existed for many years, and had done excellent work; but the Archbishop was anxious to widen its scope, and to make "Church Defence" the duty of the Church as a whole rather than of some private association. For this purpose he summoned a small meeting of leading churchmen at Lambeth in May, when the project was discussed, and among those present were Lords Salisbury, Selborne, Cranborne, and Wolmer; the Bishop of London (afterwards Archbishop Temple), and the Bishop of St Asaph. Lord Salisbury suggested that the only way to guard against disestablishment in the future would be to form a permanent Church organisation with enrolled membership on the model of the Primrose League. From this sprang the body known as the "Central Church Committee," which rapidly created an organisation all over the country, and rendered great services in opposition to the Welsh Disestablishment Bill at the General Election of 1895. The members of the Executive Committee first appointed, were the Bishop of St Asaph, Lord Cranborne, Lord Wolmer, and myself. In 1896 the Central Church Committee was amalgamated with the Church Defence Institution; but the immediate danger having passed, it was found exceedingly difficult to keep the organisation together, and many of the

clergy were also extremely afraid of appearing to take a side in party politics. With this feeling we may sympathise; but had the Church Committee obtained a tithe of the support accorded by the political nonconformists to the so-called "Free Church Councils," the position of the Church and her schools and endowments would have been different now to what it is.

Another Church movement was the formation of a small committee, of which Lord Cranborne was the chief, for the purpose of resisting the pressure which Mr Arthur Acland was putting on the Voluntary schools. Mr Acland was reputed to be no friend of the Church, and he used his powers as Vice-President of the Council to compel the managers of Church schools to make large structural alterations, giving them the shortest conceivable time in which to carry them out. The result was a great outcry in the country, of which Lord Cranborne's Committee took advantage, and plied Mr Acland with questions in the House of Commons, with satisfactory results in many cases. Some schools, unfortunately, had to be given up, in other cases mitigation of the demands was conceded or extension of time. But in its main object Mr Acland's policy succeeded—it was the direct cause of that "intolerable strain" which nearly paralysed the Voluntary schools and led up to the unfortunate legislation of 1902.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SESSION OF 1895 AND THE DEFEAT OF THE GOVERNMENT

THE recess of 1894-1895 was a time of comparative peace. Members of Parliament on both sides had been too exhausted by the prolonged sittings of the House to show great activity in the country. As the session approached, curiosity was rife as to what the Government would do. Many were of opinion that they would propose a resolution in the House of Commons condemning the House of Lords, and then go to the country with the one cry of "Down with the Lords"; and indeed it is believed that a strong party in the Cabinet favoured this course. The alternative policy was to "fill up the cup," by passing through the House of Commons other items of the Newcastle Programme in order that the Lords might reject them. This was the course actually adopted, though the Government did not appear to be in a very great hurry to begin the process of filling, as they did not summon Parliament to meet till February 5. It was a hazardous and unwise plan, and not likely to succeed with the small and precarious majority at their disposal. Their position had been rendered worse, moreover, since the last session, by the secession of the Parnellites, not a very strong party, it is true, but a difference of

18 votes on a division is a serious matter when the entire majority is under 40. Still the Government evidently hoped to carry through the session, while the Unionists were equally hopeful of defeating them. We met on February 5, during the longest and coldest frost I remember, and were eager to get to grips immediately. The Queen's Speech was, in Mr Balfour's phrase, "Newcastle Programme as before," though the items had been shuffled a little, an Irish Land Bill being now first on the list, Welsh Dis-establishment second, and Local Veto third. After the usual dreary discussion on the general question of the Address, the Government had to submit to having what were practically three votes of censure moved on them in one week. First, Mr Jeffreys moved an amendment which was really designed to call attention to the prevalent agricultural depression, but into which references to the depression in trade generally, and the numbers of the unemployed had been cunningly introduced, with the hope of securing the support of Mr Keir Hardie and other "independent labour" members, who had lately begun to show signs of restiveness. There was indeed great distress at the time in London and other large towns, partly in consequence of the prolonged frost, for which, after all, the Government were not responsible. In the course of the debate Mr Keir Hardie suggested a Select Committee on the unemployed, which the Government immediately granted, thus neutralising his opposition. It was truly remarked by some wit in the lobby that the Committee would probably outlast the frost. Mr Lowther and Mr Chaplin supported the amendment from the Protectionist and Bimetallic points of view respectively; but the only really remarkable speech was that of Sir William Harcourt,

who treated the House to a lengthy exposition of pure Cobdenite doctrine, charging the Opposition with no wish except to raise prices, while, in his opinion, the cheapness of commodities had been the greatest boon to the people. I have often wondered, in connection with this speech, how it is that if cheapness is best for the country, periods of prosperity have always been periods of high prices. Mr Jeffreys' amendment was defeated by 12 votes only. The next day Mr Redmond, on behalf of the Parnellites, moved the second vote of censure, which was to the effect that the time had come for submitting the question of Home Rule to the judgment of the people. In this case the Government majority rose to 20. Lastly, came the official Opposition amendment to the Address moved by Mr Chamberlain. It aimed at condemning the filling-up-the-cup policy, and was worded as follows:—"Humbly to represent to your Majesty that it is contrary to the public interest that under the guidance of your Majesty's advisers the time of Parliament should be occupied in the discussion of measures which, according to their own statements, there is no prospect of passing into law, while proposals involving grave constitutional changes have been announced, on which the judgment of Parliament should be taken without delay." I did not hear this debate, as, like many other members, I was laid up with influenza, but at the urgent request of the Whips I was dragged out of bed and driven down in a close carriage to the House, so as to take part in the division. When I got there I was placed in a warm room behind the Speaker's chair, where were two other Unionist members in the same condition as myself: in the Opposition room were three supporters of the Government, similarly situ-

ated, so that we might all have been paired and remained in bed. But the Whips on each side were determined not to lose any vote which could by any means be recorded, with the result that we all risked our lives, and doubtless spread the influenza germs far and wide through the palace of Westminster. The Government carried the day, but with a majority of 14 only.

Having escaped defeat on the Address, the Government appeared likely to come to grief on a motion for adjournment a few days later. In order to meet a serious deficit in the Budget, the Indian Government had reimposed import duties on cotton goods, and although countervailing excise duties had also been put on, it was held by many that they were insufficient in amount, so that Indian cotton would be protected against imported cottons. If this were so, the result would be a serious matter for Lancashire, and the great cotton interest there was up in arms. A motion for the adjournment of the House was made by Sir Henry James, speaking on behalf of his constituents at Bury, and it was thought that this would be supported not only by the whole Unionist Party, but also by the Lancashire Liberal members, in which case the Government would inevitably be defeated. Sir Henry James was the fine flower of Whig Unionism in the House of Commons, and had earned immortal credit by the very well-known fact that he had refused the Lord Chancellorship rather than vote for Home Rule, and he shared with Mr Leonard Courtney and Mr Whitbread that reputation for political virtue and piety which it is so difficult to account for and at times to appreciate. But no man is at his best when speaking on behalf of his constituents, whose wishes

are very often at variance with the interests of the nation at large. Sir Henry James was certainly not at his best on the present occasion, while in reply Mr Fowler made the best speech of his life, which is saying a great deal. He showed that the imposition of the new duties was absolutely necessary, having regard to the state of Indian finance ; that they were not protective in their character, or at least were not intended to be ; adding that if they were found to be so the Government would modify them ; and finally he appealed to the House not to sacrifice the well-being of India to party and sectional interests. It is often said that speeches in the House have no effect upon votes, than which there is no greater fallacy. Mr Fowler's speech did not merely avert defeat ; it gave the Government a positive triumph. Mr Goschen rose from the front Opposition bench and refused to support Sir Henry James, suggesting that a conference of all parties interested might be held to settle the details of the countervailing excise duties, so as to ensure that the scheme should not give any advantage to Indian manufactures over Lancashire, to which proposal Sir W. Harcourt agreed. Notwithstanding this, Lord George Hamilton supported the motion, as did several Lancashire members, but when the division was called Sir Henry James's motion was defeated by 195 votes !

The Government now proceeded with their legislative programme—the Irish Land Bill, a very complicated measure designed to amend the Act of 1881, and the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, both of which were read a first time after debate, but without division. The former is of no further interest, subsequent legislation having entirely changed the conditions then existing. But in view of present

probabilities it may be well to record what the Government proposed in 1895 in the way of Welsh Disestablishment. The Church establishment was to cease altogether in Wales and Monmouthshire, the civil boundaries, not the existing diocesan boundaries, being taken. Consequently certain Welsh parishes situated in English dioceses would have been disestablished, and similarly certain English parishes in Welsh dioceses would have escaped. All rights of patronage were to be destroyed. All endowments given before the year 1703 were to be confiscated, and to be handed over to the Welsh County Councils, who were to be permitted to fritter them away in all kinds of minor objects, including the establishment of museums; in connection with which proposal a Welsh farmer who had previously supported disestablishment, hoping to get rid of the payment of the tithe, was heard to remark that he would sooner support the parson than an old bones house! Existing life interests of incumbents were respected, and permission to commute them if desired was granted. The cathedrals were to be vested in the hands of the commissioners appointed to carry out the Act; the parish churches were to be handed back to a Representative Church Body to be formed after the Act passed. Such were the broad outlines of the measure of spoliation which the Government, with their small and varying majority, and without any pretence of a mandate from the country generally, proposed for the four oldest dioceses of the province of Canterbury.

Of course we all knew that it was only to "fill the cup," and that the whole discussion was the veriest ploughing of the sand of the seashore. In fact, nobody realised better than Mr Asquith, who was

in charge of the Bill, that if it ever got through the House of Commons the Lords would immediately throw it out. But we had to treat so serious a matter seriously, and the debates on both the first and second readings were first-rate in character, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and Mr Balfour taking a leading part on the Unionist side, while the Church Parliamentary Party (or Black Brigade, as we were now jocularly styled) were well to the fore. On the second reading a remarkable speech was made in support of the Bill by Mr G. W. E. Russell, the Under-Secretary for Home Affairs, himself a High Churchman and a member of a great Unionist family, in which he astonished the House by a strange attack on his own ancestors as having profited by previous Acts of disendowment, and by quoting at length the dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely in *Henry V*.

The quotation was indeed signally appropriate :

CANTERBURY : My Lord, I'll tell you that self bill is urged  
 Which in the Eleventh year of the last King's reign  
 Was like and had indeed against us passed,  
 But that the scamping and unquiet time  
 Did push it out of further question.

ELY : But how, my Lord, shall we resist it now ?

CANTERBURY : It must be thought on. If it pass against us  
 We lose the better half of our possessions ;  
 For all the temporal lands which men devout  
 By testament have given to the Church  
 Would they strip from us ; being valued thus  
 As much as would maintain to the King's honour  
 Full fifteen earls and fifteen hundred knights,  
 Six thousand and two hundred good esquires.  
 And, to relief of lazarus and weak age,  
 Of indigent faint souls, past corporal toil,  
 A hundred alms-houses right well supplied ;  
 And to the coffers of the King beside  
 A thousand pounds by the year. Thus runs the Bill.

ELY : This would drink deep.

CANTERBURY : 'Twould drink the cup and all.

Certainly history repeated itself in the Government proposals of 1895, and also in the "scamping and unquiet time" which again "did push it out of further question." After five nights debate the second reading was carried by a majority of 44, Mr Chamberlain, always frankly a Liberationist, giving a silent vote in its favour, while fifteen Liberal Unionists abstained. Directly after the division I handed in twelve pages of amendments on behalf of various members of the Church Parliamentary Committee.

Meanwhile, an event had happened which caused violent contention, and nearly upset the Government. Mr Peel had announced his intended resignation of the Speakership, and the question arose who was to be his successor. The Conservative Party, from whose ranks a Speaker had not been chosen for sixty years, felt it very hard that a Liberal Government at what appeared to be nearly the end of their existence should elect one of their own nominees ; and it is only fair to the Government to say that they appeared at first to be quite willing to propose Mr Leonard Courtney, who was a Liberal Unionist, and who had been Mr Mellor's predecessor as Chairman of Committees. But the hot-headed Radicals refused to accept Mr Courtney, who, moreover, was by no means popular with the Unionists. Then it was announced that Mr Campbell-Bannerman would be nominated, and he was undoubtedly covetous of the position and excellently qualified. Fate, in the shape of Cabinet dissensions, reserved him for greater things ; the Government were unwilling to part with him because, as was said, he was the only Cabinet Minister who was on speaking terms with all the other Cabinet Ministers, he was indeed a sort of

indispensable harmoniser among conflicting elements. While the Government hesitated, the Radicals, headed by Mr Labouchere, took the matter into their own hands. They determined to run Mr Gully, and their choice was adopted by the Government. Now Mr Gully was a highly respected lawyer, who was leader of the Northern Circuit. Nobody will deny that he possessed many of the qualities necessary for the position, and that he made a worthy successor to Speaker Peel. But his original appointment was a job. He had not been a very regular attendant of the House, and had spoken very seldom. He had never served on a Committee. He was indeed personally unknown, even by sight, to the majority of members. Shortly before his election his friends were conducting him round the House to introduce him to members who had been his colleagues there for several years. I can remember his being first pointed out to me in the tea-room. Under the circumstances there was natural indignation on the part of the Unionists, who determined to adopt the unusual course of opposing his election, and who possessed an excellent candidate in Sir M. White-Ridley.

Mr Speaker Peel made his farewell speech on April 8, and every member felt a personal loss in his retirement. Two days later the election of his successor took place, the chair being vacant, and the Clerk of the House (Sir R. Palgrave) who practically presided, pointing out with his finger the member selected to address the House. Mr Whitbread proposed Mr Gully; Sir J. Mowbray, Sir M. White-Ridley—both in felicitous speeches. The two candidates had then to submit themselves, and members craned eagerly forward to see and hear

Mr Gully, who created a most favourable impression, as did also Sir M. White-Ridley. Mr Balfour then rose and expressed the feelings of the whole Unionist Party, by warning the Government that if they used their party majority to elect Mr Gully, the party which he led would not feel bound to re-elect him "under changed circumstances." Sir William Harcourt responded rather warmly, and amid great excitement the division was taken, Mr Gully being elected by the narrow majority of 11. He thanked the House, took his seat in the chair, and we adjourned for our Easter holiday.

In narrating the contest over the election of Speaker, I have omitted the introduction of one other measure which, though we did not hear much more of it in the House, was destined to play a very large part, and for the Government a very disastrous part, in the country—the Local Control Bill for regulating the liquor traffic, introduced by Sir William Harcourt shortly before the adjournment. This measure was particularly under the protection of Sir William, while the Welsh Disestablishment Bill was specially favoured by Lord Rosebery.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was in a very lugubrious mood, and his measure for closing public-houses without compensation by a two-thirds majority of those local electors who took the trouble to vote caused little enthusiasm among the Teetotal Party, while it excited violent opposition on the part of the Trade. It contributed materially to the growing unpopularity of the Government in the country.

After the recess we set to work on the Committee stage of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill. On going into Committee, I moved an instruction that the Bill be divided into two halves, Disestablishment and

Disendowment, the former to be proceeded with first. Liberal churchmen and others are often found in the country who profess to be in favour of Disestablishment but to view Disendowment with aversion; but on the present occasion none such were found in the House, the supporters of the Government voting unanimously against the instruction. On the Committee stage being reached the progress was extremely slow, endless controversial points being raised by the Bill; and the Government greatly assisted the Church defenders by taking the measure on Mondays and Tuesdays only, thus giving us an interval of five days each week in which to draft fresh amendments and to compose new speeches. It was, moreover, beginning to be increasingly plain that the Government could not last much longer. Their majority grew smaller and smaller. On May 20, on an amendment moved by Mr Lloyd-George, it dropped to 10, and would have been a minus quantity, but Mr Lloyd-George and his friends voted against their own amendment! The next night, on an amendment of Mr Macdona's, it was only 9, and it subsequently fell to 7. At the same time it was announced that Mr Gladstone had withdrawn his pair in favour of the Government, thus confirming the idea I had always held, that his resignation had been largely due to his disapproval of the Welsh Bill. In the country the Government were faring even worse. Every by-election went against them. They lost Walworth, Mid-Norfolk, and Inverness-shire in quick succession. The election in the last-named county took place under curious circumstances. The seat had been carried at the General Election by Dr MacGregor, a most pompous Scottish Radical. Dr MacGregor was very

anxious to get a Crofters Bill through which had been introduced by the Government, and he continually plied Ministers with questions as to when it was to be proceeded with. Getting no satisfaction, he asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on May 20—Monday—if he was prepared to make an announcement, to which Sir William Harcourt replied that he would make one on Thursday. “That is not good enough for me,” exclaimed Dr MacGregor, and stalked majestically out of the Chamber, amid loud ironical cheers and laughter. He promptly applied for the Chiltern Hundreds. The seat was lost to the Government, Mr Baillie of Dochfour being elected by a large majority.

Another by-election under rather peculiar circumstances was that at West Edinburgh, occasioned by the death of Lord Selborne, which caused Lord Wolmer to go to the Upper House. Lord Selborne's death was keenly felt by churchmen, and the removal of Lord Wolmer from the House of Commons at the present moment was a great blow to the Church Party there. Lord Wolmer, indeed, was very loth to go. He held that, though by his father's death he had become a Peer of the Realm, he was not a Lord of Parliament, as he had not applied to be summoned to the House of Lords. He actually came and took his seat in the House of Commons, till Mr Labouchere rose and called the attention to the fact that a nobleman was present in the Chamber. If he had seen a burglar or a snake he could not have evinced greater horror. The Speaker called upon Lord Selborne to withdraw below the Bar, which he did, and a warm debate ensued, Lord Selborne's claim being eagerly supported by Mr George Curzon and Mr Brodrick, both

of whom, as eldest sons of peers, might find themselves some day in the same position. The debate was renewed more than once, and consumed much Government time. Finally, the question was submitted to a Select Committee, who decided against Lord Selborne, who was thus compelled to quit the congenial air of the House of Commons, and found himself a member of the House of Lords *malgré lui*. In the by-election which followed, Mr Lewis M'Iver held the seat at West Edinburgh for the Unionists by a large majority.

We continued our opposition to the Bill with energy and high hopes, the guerilla warfare at first chiefly falling on the shoulders of the Church Committee, as Messrs Hanbury and Bowles, the two leading obstructionists of the House, professed themselves to be not well versed in Church questions ; but after a short time an arrangement was made, and in consideration of our assisting them in opposing a Seal Fisheries Bill, of which I confess that our knowledge was slender, they studied and mastered the details of Queen Anne's Bounty, and fell with long-winded fury on the clause of the Welsh Bill which dealt with that honourable institution so far as it affected the Church in Wales, which was a great assistance to us. Queen Anne's Bounty was indeed discussed for days, so much so that it was remarked that Queen Anne appeared to be very much alive again. Nor can it be fairly said that the debates were obstructive. The intricacies involved in any attempt to separate the Welsh dioceses from the rest of the Church are great, and the points raised were generally of real importance. Meanwhile the Welsh Party themselves, particularly Mr Lloyd-George and Mr D. A. Thomas, were dissatisfied

with the Government on account of certain concessions which Mr Asquith had made to the Church Party, and actually proposed to vote against the Government under certain circumstances. We have already seen that they had nearly caused a defeat before, and had only prevented it by opposing their own amendment. It was believed that they would not repeat this, and that on Monday, June 24, the Government would be defeated on a certain cunningly devised amendment. But the Government did not survive till that day.

Friday, June 21, was apparently a day of peace in the House. It was the week-end Supply day, when many members invariably absented themselves ; and beyond this, Army estimates were under discussion, which generally implied a little quiet talk by a few retired colonels, and passed without a division. The Chamber was very empty, most of the Ministers being on the terrace, where Sir William Harcourt is said to have remarked how pleasant it was to have a day without a crisis. But a plot had been hatched, comparable only to that of the fifth of November, with the difference that the explosive employed was cordite and not gunpowder, and that unlike the attempt of Guy Fawkes, it succeeded.

It had transpired a short time before that the store of cordite and small arms ammunition for the army was exceedingly short, and the Service members of the House, taking a serious professional view of the situation, had framed an amendment on the subject, which was entrusted to Mr Brodrick, who had been Financial Secretary to the War Office in the last Unionist Government. Mr Brodrick moved his amendment, and Mr Campbell-Bannerman replied, not very happily, admitting that there were

only in hand 400 rounds of ammunition per man for 110,000 men, and with other branches of the service about 100,000,000 cartridges altogether, which, as Mr Balfour said, was a serious state of affairs. A long discussion ensued, but nobody appeared to expect a crisis. The debate was business-like, and the atmosphere of the House perfectly serene. But in anticipation of the division certain members of the Service Committee had privately urged their friends to make a special point of being in attendance that afternoon, with the result that there was an unexpected muster of Unionists present. When the division was taken, after much shuffling of places, the Clerk finally handed the paper with the numbers to Mr Akers-Douglas, the Opposition Whip, the figures being, for the amendment 132, against 125. There was naturally great excitement, as great indeed as was possible in so small a House, and Mr Campbell-Bannerman jumped up, threw his papers into his hat, and at once moved the adjournment of the debate. The other orders of the day were at once taken, and the House adjourned in confusion.

This was the end of the Rosebery Government of 1894-1895. It was not indeed certain that they would resign, other courses being open to them. The reduction of the vote, which had been carried in Committee of Supply, might have been rescinded on the Report stage, and the Government could have remained. Mr Campbell-Bannerman, however, took a serious view of the case, regarding what had occurred as a vote of censure upon himself, and insisted on resignation. Without him it was felt impossible to continue. And besides this, Ministers were fully aware of their great and growing weakness. As we have already seen, it was

touch and go every night on the Welsh Church Bill, and if they survived one week, who could tell that they would survive the next? The strain on the members of the Government and on their supporters was immense, and even though it was perhaps greater on the Opposition we felt that we were winning, and could bear it therefore better. Granting, however, that the Government accepted the defeat, they might if they had liked have dissolved instead of resigning. Apparently Lord Rosebery and his friends thought that there was a tactical advantage to be gained by putting the other side in, thus making them show their hand before the Dissolution. We have seen this plan repeated by Mr Balfour since. Neither in 1895 nor in 1906 did it succeed; nor is this wonderful. On both occasions the country had quite made up its mind to have a change, and so far as the tactical point is concerned, it is probable that the idea of "giving the new Government a chance" more than counterbalanced any loss sustained through the disclosure of their composition and policy. On Saturday, June 22, the Ministry resigned, and on the following Monday Lord Salisbury was commissioned by Her Majesty to form his third Administration.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NEW GOVERNMENT—THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1895

THE new Premier lost no time in allotting the principal posts in his administration, and in announcing that his sole immediate policy was dissolution. The new Government was a coalition, the Liberal Unionists being now willing to do what they refused to do in 1886, viz., join the Conservatives in office. The Duke of Devonshire became Lord President of the Council, Lord Lansdowne War Minister, while, much to the general surprise, Mr Chamberlain accepted what up to then had always been regarded as the comparatively unimportant office of Colonial Secretary. It did not remain unimportant much longer. Among other Liberal Unionists, Lord Selborne became Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Sir H. James (promoted to the Peerage) Chancellor of the Duchy; while minor posts were found for Messrs Austen Chamberlain, T. W. Russell, Jesse Collings, Powell Williams, and others. The accession of these erstwhile members of the Liberal Party rendered the Government exceedingly strong both in administrative and debating power; the combination of Lord Salisbury with the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Lansdowne rendering them unassailable in the Lords, while in the Commons Mr Balfour, Mr

Chamberlain, Sir M. Hicks-Beach (who became Chancellor of the Exchequer), and Mr Goschen, the new First Lord of the Admiralty, were a powerful quartette, though Sir William Harcourt, Sir Henry Fowler, Mr Asquith, and Sir Edward Grey required some beating. What the Government gained in strength, however, through the accession of the Liberal Unionists, they largely lost by the way in which many of the offices were distributed among the Conservative wing of the party. The old gang, against whom Lord R. Churchill had so often declaimed in vain, prevailed all along the line. No one, indeed, could cavil at the appointment to Cabinet office of Mr Chaplin, or Mr Long, or Sir M. White-Ridley, while Mr Curzon fulfilled the general expectation by becoming Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. But in general the men who had worked in Opposition were left out in the cold, and the rewards went to the friends or relations of certain great families. The only conspicuous examples of promotion for downright hard work alone were those of Messrs Hanbury, Macartney, and Hayes Fisher, who became Secretary to the Treasury, Secretary to the Admiralty, and Junior Whip respectively. As a rule, the rank and file were neglected—the country gentlemen, the business men, the younger men from the universities with brains but without noble relations. Mr Bartley had shared with Mr Hanbury the credit of having been the most useful man in Opposition; in fact, in the opinion of many, he had excelled him. But Mr Hanbury was taken, Mr Bartley was left. Observers at the time noticed the tendency and deplored it. An exclusive system of this nature was all very well in the old days of high franchises and pocket boroughs; but, with our modern suffrage, to attempt to revive

now the old Whig plan of Government by great families was to court disaster. The Tory Party in the country was democratic—the majority of Tory members were returned by the working men of the towns. That the enthusiasm of the Tory working men should all end in aristocratic exclusiveness, and in some cases incompetence, was intolerable. The Government of 1895 was in many respects a most brilliant combination; but this fatal seed was sown then, and it was destined to bear a luxuriant crop in the years which followed.

The General Election was announced on July 8, and the first polls were fixed for July 12. In the meantime the Liberals had not strengthened their position by the creation of new peerages, some of the gentlemen ennobled being very rich but otherwise undistinguished, in consequence of which it was stated that they had bought their honours by lavish contributions to the party funds. Whether this be true or not, I cannot say, but such things have not been unheard of on both sides. In old days, no doubt kings used to replenish their privy purses by selling honours, and now that political parties have usurped so many other prerogatives of the sovereign, it is quite possible that they have usurped this also. The simple fact, however, that they had created peers at all at a time when they were arguing that there should be no peers, did not make things easier for the late Government.

From the very beginning it was clear how the elections would go. The Unionists were full of hope, and their organisations (even the Conservative Organisation) were good. The Radicals, on the other hand, were in a chaotic state; each leader had his own item of the Newcastle Programme as the

particular plank of his platform, while their organisation was hopelessly weak, and they were short both of money (notwithstanding the recent peerages) and of candidates.

They left over a hundred seats uncontested, including my own, which enabled me and others to assist the Unionists in various constituencies. I shall never forget hearing the results of the first pollings. It was a Sunday morning, and I was staying in Carnarvonshire with Mr Ellis Nanney, who was gallantly attempting, and with good prospects, to oust Mr Lloyd-George from the Carnarvon Boroughs. As we entered church his agent met us and told us he had election news which he would reserve till after service, as otherwise our thoughts might very likely wander a little during our devotions. This was the very way to whet our curiosity, and we made him stand and deliver his information, which was that the Radicals had lost seven seats, including two at Derby, where Sir William Harcourt had been defeated. I confess we felt more inclined to cheer than to pray. As it began so it ended. The net Liberal loss amounted altogether to eighty-three seats, Mr John Morley, Mr Arnold Morley, Mr Shaw Lefevre, and Mr Hibbert sharing Sir William Harcourt's fate. Even in Wales we won six seats, thus justifying a remark I had ventured to make on the second reading of the Welsh Church Bill that the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church was not so popular in the Principality as the Welsh Radicals supposed, and that we should see this if a General Election took place upon the question. The final result was to give the new Unionist Government a majority of no less than 132, the greatest triumph achieved by any party since the first reformed Parlia-

ment of 1832, when the Liberals obtained a majority of 370. So utterly, hopelessly, and completely was the record of the late Liberal Government condemned by the country in 1895.

What were the causes? Undoubtedly the chief was the deadweight of Home Rule. Mr Gladstone could scarcely endure the burden; none of his lieutenants were equal to it. Yet to throw it off meant the desertion of the Irish, and certain sudden death. Next, the party had been held together for years by the mere glamour of Mr Gladstone's name, a splendid asset while it lasted, but which left little behind it when it was gone. Thirdly, divided leadership—the rivalry and scarcely veiled disputes of Sir W. Harcourt and Lord Rosebery. Lastly, the Government had tried to submerge the whole Constitution at the same time. At one and the same moment they were proposing to dissolve the Union with Ireland, to disestablish the Church in Wales, and to abolish the House of Lords. Now, the average British elector has Conservative instincts, and though on certain occasions he is prepared to support some one definite Radical proposal, this wholesale destruction was beyond his digestive capacity.

The agitation against the Lords fell particularly flat; their action in rejecting Home Rule was approved, and though the Trade Unionists were angry about the Employers' Liability Bill, the Trade Union vote is usually Radical when it is not Labour, and the great majority of the working classes outside the Trade Unions supported the Lords' attitude on the question of contracting out. The Church Party was well organised and fought splendidly, and many a Liberal vote was detached on the question of

Disestablishment. Lastly, the Local Veto Bill alarmed the whole liquor interest, stronger than ever since the conversion of many great breweries into limited liability companies with thousands of shareholders ; and Sir W. Harcourt's persistence with this subject not only lost him his own seat, but also many other seats to his party. So far as the Unionists were concerned, we came through the election practically unpledged. We promised "to do something" for agriculture. We hoped to relieve the intolerable strain on the Voluntary schools. We were for a firm foreign policy, though, indeed, little fault could be found with Lord Rosebery on this score. Then, of course, there would be better trade. A good deal of mild protection was talked, and Kentish candidates, including myself, suggested duties on foreign hops. Otherwise we were merely committed to resist the various revolutionary proposals of the late Government, especially Home Rule for Ireland.

The House met on August 12, a strange day for a Tory Government to have selected for the commencement of business. The first duty of the House of Commons was the election of Speaker, and notwithstanding the circumstances which had attended Mr Gully's first election, and the warning then uttered by Mr Balfour as to what would occur in the event of changed circumstances, the Government wisely decided on his re-election. His proposer was Sir John Mowbray, the highly honoured "father of the House," and his seconder Mr John Ellis, an old member of the Opposition, much respected notwithstanding his Little England tendencies. The action of the Government met with general approval.

The appearance of the House presented a great contrast to that of the late Parliament. For the first time both wings of the Unionist Party sat on the same side, fully occupying the whole of the Ministerial side, the Liberal Unionists, however, still showing a marked preference for the third and fourth benches below the gangway. On the Opposition side the emaciated ranks of the Liberals barely filled the space above the gangway ; the Nationalists, with the more pronounced Welsh members, and a few extreme Radicals headed by Mr Labouchere and Sir Charles Dilke, sitting below the gangway. On the front Opposition Bench many well-known figures were absent, noticeably Mr John Morley and Mr Shaw Lefevre ; but to the universal satisfaction Sir William Harcourt, notwithstanding his defeat at Derby, had reappeared, Mr Warmington, K.C., having most unselfishly resigned a perfectly safe seat in Monmouthshire in his favour. It was remarked at the time that Mr Warmington, who had always been called by his friends in the House, and I believe at the Bar, "Mr Warmingpan"—for no other reason that I know of except the similarity of his name—had now proved to be the very thing he was called. Thus did the great Sir William become a gallant little Welshman.

The Queen's Speech referred to foreign affairs only, no legislation being proposed, the Houses being called together simply for the purpose of finishing the Supply for the year. Under the circumstances it might have been thought that a few days would have sufficed, especially as the estimates submitted had been framed by the late Government. The Opposition, however, set to work to obstruct their own estimates, for what purpose nobody could

tell. Obstruction in the abstract is always wrong; in practice it is often perfectly justifiable if some important object is to be gained, for example, the postponement of an objectionable measure, but in all cases it should be artistic and have a purpose. To obstruct their own estimates when no legislation lay behind them was utterly purposeless and inartistic. Yet the stream of talk on every kind of trivial subject continued, and it was not till September 5 that the little band of militant Radicals and Irish allowed the House to be prorogued, and members, worn out with the length of the session and the labours of the electoral campaign, separated for a well-earned rest.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RECESS OF 1895-1896—A VISIT TO JAPAN— FOREIGN AND COLONIAL DANGERS

I SPENT the recess of 1895-1896 in a long travel round the world—the chief object being to visit Japan. We arrived there at a very interesting moment, peace having been concluded some months before with China after the victorious war, and the Straits of Shimonoseki were gaily decorated to welcome the Imperial Guards home from Formosa. The war had been a great surprise to Europeans, especially to British diplomatists in China, who had been convinced that that country was bound to win in the long run. Englishmen, however, who had lived in Japan, and had seen the extraordinary progress of that marvellous people, had predicted a result very similar to what occurred; but their warnings were unheeded, and the issue of the war found our Foreign Office quite unprepared for it. The treaty of peace concluded between the two countries in April had stipulated for the cession of the Liao-tung Peninsula with the great fortress of Port Arthur to Japan, in addition to Formosa and the Pescadores; but Russia, France, and Germany had intervened, and compelled the Japanese to hand back the former. In this movement Great Britain took no part either for or against the Japanese people.

The result of this affected the whole of our future relations with the Far East. On the one hand, it completely destroyed our influence at Pekin. Since the days of Sir Harry Parkes we had always been the leading power in China, which was quite natural when it is remembered that our trade was infinitely greater than that of any other country. But now that we had stood aside and allowed others to do what the Chinese would have expected us to do, viz., save them from the effects of their defeats, they no longer regarded us in the same light as formerly, and it is not too much to say that Russia reigned paramount at Pekin afterwards. In fact, our diplomacy there was utterly eclipsed, and our prestige gone for ever. This fact has to be borne in mind in connection with the very difficult situation with which Lord Salisbury had to deal before long. So, on the other hand, our refusal to join the three powers in despoiling Japan of her victories made us immensely popular there, as we and other English tourists found in the autumn of 1895. On every hand I heard suggestions that our benevolent neutrality should be developed into an alliance, and it must in fairness be said that Lord Rosebery's refusal to join with Russia, France, and Germany, though it destroyed our position in China, paved the way for the Anglo-Japanese treaties concluded by the Unionist Government a few years later. It was a revolution in our Far Eastern policy, but a revolution thoroughly justified by the extraordinary upheaval caused by the rise of Japan into the position of a Great Power.

Foreign and colonial affairs occupied public attention to the exclusion of home topics in the winter, and a great state of tension existed at the end of the year. In a speech to his constituents

shortly after the election, Mr George Curzon had stated that whereas under Liberal governments we always had trouble abroad, these troubles were invariably dispersed on the advent of the Conservatives to power like threatening clouds by the sunshine. A more unfortunate remark could not have been made. In the winter of 1895-1896 a perfect epidemic of trouble broke out all over the world, and we were threatened with half a dozen wars at the same time. First we had trouble in the Near East. The Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid, probably the cleverest ruler in Europe, had permitted or ordered massacres in Armenia on a prodigious scale, which shocked every Christian country. I say "or ordered," because, from what I have since heard at Constantinople, it is probable that this was the case: the Sultan, though a most humane man in private life, being always ready to adopt any drastic course which he may regard as necessary in the interest of the State, or of that Pan-Islamic idea by which he has raised himself in the Mohammedan world to a position unequalled by any of his recent predecessors, and there can be no doubt that the Armenians had long been a source of great annoyance to him. Lord Salisbury took a strong line, in common with France and Russia, in denouncing the massacres and demanding reforms from the Sultan. The reforms were of course promised—the Sultan actually wrote a private letter to Lord Salisbury protesting his innocence and good intentions, but of course they were not carried out. Lord Salisbury was then urged by philanthropists and philo-Armenians in this country to follow up his words by deeds, and to declare war on Turkey. Had he done so the whole Eastern Question would have been reopened, and we

might have found ourselves at war with more than one European power—France and Russia refusing to go beyond verbal protests, while the German Emperor had already assumed the rôle of best friend and protector of the Sultan. There were rumours of war in the East, however, and much perturbation of the Embassies on the Bosphorus, when another and greater peril arose and directed attention elsewhere. A boundary dispute between Venezuela and the British Colony of Guiana had been pending for many years, and affairs had been brought to a crisis by the Venezuelans hoisting their flag on undoubtedly British territory, and subsequently firing on a British gunboat. Lord Salisbury had remonstrated and demanded an apology, and when this was not forthcoming he presented an ultimatum to Venezuela. The Venezuelans appealed to the United States of America, quoting on their side that very flexible document called the Monroe doctrine, upon which President Cleveland sent a message to Congress, declaring the determination of his Government to resist the wilful aggression of Great Britain, and proposing to appoint an independent Commission to investigate the boundary dispute, and to report to Congress without reference to this country. What President Cleveland's object was nobody could surmise, except that a Presidential Election was shortly impending, and nothing is so popular with the politicians of the States as "twisting the lion's tail"; but the result of his action was that for a few days we were on the brink of war with America. This disaster was, however, averted by the good sense of the people on both sides of the Atlantic—statesmen, jurists, men of business and financiers, philanthropists and clergy, not to mention the Press—

intervening to prevent such a calamity, and to render a *modus vivendi* imperative. Some months later the dispute was settled by the arrangement of a treaty of arbitration between this country and Venezuela by Lord Salisbury and the American Secretary of State. Before, however, public opinion had been thoroughly reassured on the American question, the Jameson Raid took place, followed by the German Emperor's telegram to President Kruger. The situation was saved by the promptness of the Government, especially of Mr Chamberlain, The Colonial Secretary at once disowned Dr Jameson, and sent Sir Hercules Robinson to Pretoria to express the regret of the Government, and to negotiate for the release of the prisoners. The German Emperor's pretensions were settled by the prompt fitting out of a flying squadron. The Kaiser, indeed, by his unwise action, proved to be our best friend. He brought round American opinion largely into sympathy with Great Britain. For, although South Africa could hardly be held to come under the Monroe doctrine, Americans resented his interference in a British affair in which he had no concern.

Thus with difficulties in the Far East, difficulties in the Near East, war barely averted with the United States, South Africa seething with disorder, and threats and trouble with Germany, Russia and France being also generally hostile to us, the new Government began the year and the session of 1896 amid gloomy surroundings. Mr Curzon's halcyon days at the Foreign Office had indeed proved illusory!

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SESSION OF 1896

PARLIAMENT met very late, not till February 11. Members of the House of Commons dislike late beginnings of the session, which mean, as a rule, late endings, with sittings protracted well into August. The state of foreign affairs was a sufficient justification on the present occasion, Ministers being naturally anxious to avoid the many embarrassing questions which would certainly arise.

The Speech from the Throne dealt at length with the various recent troubles abroad in reassuring language. The legislative programme included measures for the relief of agriculture, for assisting Voluntary schools, for compensating workmen for accidents, and, of course (for what Queen's Speech would be complete without it?) for dealing with the Irish Land Question.

The mover and seconder of the Address in the House of Commons, Mr G. Goschen and Sir J. Stirling Maxwell, acquitted themselves better than is usually the case; the former arrayed as a Colonel of Volunteers, the latter in a costume which excited great curiosity, and which turned out to be the uniform of a Scottish Archer. The general debate which ensued was not remarkable, nor were the amendments which

followed, although Mr Labouchere succeeded in making a violent attack on the Chartered Company, not obscurely hinting that Mr Chamberlain was, in some way, privy to the Jameson Raid or to the events which led up to it. The Colonial Secretary warmly repudiated the suggestion, and added that he did not believe that either Mr Rhodes or the Chartered Company had any knowledge of what was taking place. The amendment was negatived, and the Address was shortly afterwards carried in the House.

Before proceeding to other business, Mr Balfour proposed a new rule for the conduct of Supply. The granting of Supply to the Crown was originally the chief function of the House of Commons, but in recent years it had had to take a secondary place compared with legislation, and was often conducted at the fag end of a session in very thin houses. This was a misfortune to the House and the country—Supply being the natural occasion for ventilating grievances and raising questions of all kinds—while huge sums of money were frequently voted with altogether inadequate discussion. Mr Balfour now proposed that Supply should be taken on one day every week—Friday—that twenty days should be allotted to it each session, that different classes should be taken on each separate occasion, *e.g.*, Foreign Office vote one week, Army the next, Irish votes a third, and so on according to the general convenience of members; and that on the last day the remaining votes should be put and divided on without debate. The advantages of the plan were obvious, but to many old Parliamentary hands, and notably to Mr James Lowther, the closing of the outstanding votes appeared most unconstitutional and

likely to curtail the liberty of Parliament. Nobody objected to the proposal more strongly than Mr Gibson Bowles, who, notwithstanding his ability and fertile wit and his great services in Opposition, had not been included in the Government. Mr Bowles had indeed developed a marked hostility to the Government and all their ways, and especially to the Liberal Unionist section of it. "When Joseph went down to the land of Goschen," he said one day, "he put his brethren into all the best places"—an allusion to Mr Austen Chamberlain and the Birmingham members, who owed their promotion to Mr Chamberlain's influence. The House laughed, but when Mr Balfour in reply referred to the "questionable taste" of the member for King's Lynn they cheered. After considerable discussion the new rule was carried, and it has proved to be one of the most successful, and will probably be one of the most permanent, of Mr Balfour's Parliamentary achievements.

The decks were now cleared for the practical work of the session, and with our great majority and our great leaders we expected to do great things. From the very beginning, however, everything seemed to go wrong, and although some useful work was accomplished, the session of 1896 will always be remembered as one of the worst managed on record.

The lateness of our meeting was a source of embarrassment. Owing to the exigencies of winding up the financial year, and carrying the chief votes of the great spending departments before March 31, the Government could not get their legislative programme under way before the Easter recess. Moreover, other great questions blocked the way. The Armenian Question was debated at great length

on a motion of Mr S. Smith, an English philanthropist who sat as a Welsh Nationalist, when Mr Curzon in a brilliant speech showed the helplessness of the British Government in face of the determination of the other powers not to allow any change in the *status quo*. Then followed two debates, one on the adjournment of the House, the other, on a day set aside for the purpose, on the Soudan Expedition which had just been undertaken by the Egyptian Government. Nobody looking back now on Lord Kitchener's three campaigns, which ended in the recapture of Khartoum, can doubt the wisdom of the Government in despatching the first of these expeditions to Dongola in 1896. The Government were, however, signally unlucky in their explanations of their policy and of the reasons for it in the House during that session, probably because they did not wish to confess at once their real object, viz., the reconquest of the Soudan. At one moment, according to Mr Curzon, our object was to defend the frontiers of Egypt from rumoured movements of Dervishes, at another to help the Italians, who had been defeated by the Abyssinians at Adowah, and were now said to be threatened by the same Dervishes at Kassala. Why we should undertake to help Italy at the cost of Egypt and India (for one of the points raised by the Opposition was that Indian troops were to be lent to Egypt and that India had to pay), while Italy's own allies, Austria and Germany, held aloof, nobody could quite understand, especially when it appeared later that Italy was not altogether grateful for our help, and that she was actually obliging us by remaining at Kassala at all. Mr Chamberlain, moreover, who was the principal speaker on the Government side in the debate on

March 20, was not particularly happy in his statement that our advance would be limited by the amount of resistance we encountered—a remark over which Sir W. Harcourt made very merry, and which was subsequently contradicted by Lord Salisbury in the House of Lords, who stated that financial considerations alone put a limit upon our enterprise in any one year. Notwithstanding these inconsistencies and obscurities we supported Ministers with large majorities, feeling that their policy was right, and would probably end in wiping out the disgrace inflicted on the Empire by the surrender of Gordon by Mr Gladstone ten years before, and that the Opposition were objecting to the policy because they were as usual indifferent to the interests of the Empire, and desired in their hearts the evacuation of Egypt. They dared, however, no more admit this, than our own leaders admitted the real object of the expedition.

The estimates for the year showed large increases, especially the Navy vote, the increase of which was generally approved. There was also an increase in the Civil Service votes, which caused some amusement now that Mr Hanbury, the “old poacher turned gamekeeper,” as Mr Bowles described him, was responsible for them. The new Secretary of the Treasury had been the most unsparing of the Treasury’s critics when in Opposition.

It was not till the very morning of the Easter adjournment that opportunity was found for the introduction of the Education Bill, which was regarded as the principal measure of the session. Sir John Gorst, ex-member of the Fourth Party, ex-Solicitor-General, ex-Under-Secretary for India, was now Vice-President of the Committee of Council

on Education, a position in which he gloried, and of which he was to be the last occupant. Sir John was also member for Cambridge University and a keen "Educationist" (a term which had lately come into vogue, and was assumed by many members about this period, though the definition of it was obscure), and it fell to his lot to introduce the Bill. His speech will always be remembered by the fact that he spent exactly seventy minutes in a general dissertation on the condition of education in this country, and exactly ten in explaining the provisions of the Bill, which was one of the most complicated ever brought before the House of Commons. We on the Unionist side listened with considerable satisfaction, while Mr Acland from the front Opposition Bench approved generally, but uttered an ominous warning as to the effect that some of the clauses might have on the Nonconformist conscience.

After the adjournment for Easter the Budget was taken. At the formation of the Government I had been appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir M. Hicks-Beach, on the acceptance of which office some of my friends condoled with me, as, though Sir Michael's great Parliamentary abilities and the immense services he had rendered to the party were universally recognised, he was supposed to have a bad temper. I can only say that during the five years I was with him I experienced the greatest kindness, and I never heard him use a hard word to any of his secretaries. It is true that he used occasionally to get impatient with members who could not or would not understand his meaning, and kept on worrying with captious criticisms and questions. Even then his public utterances were couched in the most courteous

tones ; in fact, he possessed the best Parliamentary manner of any man I ever met. But he would sometimes give vent to his feelings in asides. Once in Committee on a Budget he could not make a member sitting on one of our back benches grasp his meaning. After he had explained the matter several times, he turned to me and said, "He is a pig, isn't he?" (meaning a pig-headed fellow). I said "yes"; "then go and tell him so," rejoined Sir Michael. I went off and said to the member in question that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was exceedingly sorry that he had failed to make his meaning clear.

Sir Michael was lucky in his Budget of 1896. If cloudless skies in foreign affairs had not marked the advent of the Unionist Government, national prosperity had. The actual Exchequer receipts in the past financial year had so largely exceeded Sir William Harcourt's estimate that there was a realised surplus of 4½ millions. This surplus would be devoted to capital expenditure in connection with naval works and in reduction of debt; but even taking the largely increased expenditure which had been proposed for the current year into account, it was estimated that there would be a surplus at the end of the year of nearly two millions. It was expected by many Conservatives that Sir Michael would utilise this for the repeal or at least the drastic modification of Sir William Harcourt's death duties. He was not, however, prepared to sacrifice so useful a source of revenue, and he only proposed one or two small alterations at a cost of about £200,000. The greater part of the surplus would be required, he explained, for the Bill to relieve the rating of land which was shortly to be brought in, and his view was

that the agricultural interest could not have it both ways. The Education Bill would absorb most of the remainder.

A very full House listened to the Budget Statement. Sir Michael's speech was a masterpiece of lucidity, and was very well received. One amusing incident occurred in the middle of it. Nearly all great Ministers require liquid refreshment in the course of their principal orations, though their particular fancy differs. Mr Gladstone was reputed to indulge in a queer concoction of eggs and sherry; Mr Balfour usually had a whisky and soda; one of the present Cabinet to my certain knowledge used to take a glass of well-concealed champagne; while in the German Reichstag Prince Bismarck is said to have carried an Army Bill with the aid of eight lemon squashes. Sir Michael always took port. It was my duty as secretary to see that he had his port on Budget days, and as a rule he brought down some of his own in a flask. This time he forgot it, and I procured him some at the refreshment bar—a light wine from the wood, of a tawny hue. It happened that there had been a considerable increase in the consumption of rum during the past year, and Sir Michael after giving the figures turned to the House and asked, "Who drinks rum?" and immediately took a sip of his tawny port. The House was convulsed with laughter, most members believing that he was drinking rum himself.

The debates on the Budget were very prolonged, the third reading not being carried till nearly the end of the session. The Opposition severely criticised the growth of expenditure, which was almost entirely due to the increase in the Navy vote; they also taunted Sir Michael with frittering away his surplus

in doles to the Government's friends, the landlords and the parsons. On the other hand, the more Tory section on our side complained bitterly that Sir William Harcourt's death duties had not been removed, and a new member, Captain Pretyman, greatly distinguished himself in his attacks on the Government on this score. It may be noted in passing that the best way to get on in the Tory Party is to take a more Tory line than a Tory Government, while to take a more Liberal line, as Lord R. Churchill had done, is fatal. A similar rule, *mutatis mutandis*, probably applies in the Liberal Camp. Mr Gibson Bowles was also greatly perturbed over Sir Michael's indifference to the wickedness of Sir William's death duties. Lengthy debates took place over one of the small amendments which Sir Michael had proposed, viz., that the duties should not be levied on pictures and other works of art of "national or historic interest" which yielded no income. Mr Gibson Bowles was of course much to the fore, the chief question being who was to decide what was of "national or historic interest?" In the course of the evening Sir Frank Lockwood, the late Solicitor-General, was seen making a sketch, which was promptly handed over to Sir Michael. It represented the Lord Chancellor (Lord Halsbury) and other legal luminaries, with a look of great perplexity on their faces, studying a portrait of Mr Gibson Bowles, and underneath the words, "Is it of national or historic interest?" By such pleasantries was the tedium of the Budget debates relieved.

We must proceed with the business of the session. The long-promised Agricultural Relief Bill was brought in shortly after the Budget resolutions, by Mr Chaplin, and its introduction was shortly

followed by the second reading, the debate upon which lasted several days. Mr Chaplin, always excellent in a set speech, made a very good case for the Bill, clearly showing how far more severely the owners and occupiers of agricultural land were rated and taxed than those who invested their money in personal property. The Bill, however, was hardly a satisfactory one. It was based on an interim report of the Royal Commission on agricultural depression appointed by the late Government, and the Opposition roundly accused the present Government of having collusively obtained its publication at the present moment through their supporters on the Commission, which is neither very improbable nor very wicked. The Commissioners—or the majority of them—had proposed that agricultural land should only pay one quarter of the rates levied upon it, the three quarters to be paid by Exchequer grant. The Government, however, were not so bold as the Commission, and proposed a reduction of one-half only. Then buildings were excluded from the benefits of the Bill—why, it is difficult to see. It was reasonable enough to exclude the farmhouses, but the farm buildings are as much part of the farm as the land itself, and useless without the land. Finally, to meet the outcry raised by the other side, the Government agreed to make the measure a temporary one, and to limit its duration to five years, while appointing a Royal Commission to inquire into the incidence of local taxation generally, thus laying themselves open to the charge of having settled nothing when they had the chance, and of setting up another Royal Commission to revise the findings of the first. Notwithstanding all these defects we supported the Bill as being the

best thing we could get for the long-suffering agricultural interest, while the Radicals, who sometimes pose in the country as the farmers' friends, proceeded to oppose it as vigorously as possible, as being class legislation and likely to benefit the landlords only, in which they were joined by one or two Tory borough members, notably Mr George Whiteley, then Conservative M.P. for Stockport.

The Government pressed on the measure as rapidly as possible, being determined to get the Committee stage through before Whitsuntide. The Radical obstructionists were in full force—Mr McKenna, a new member with an omniscient manner, being well to the fore. Mr Chaplin's conduct of the Bill in Committee was not always happy. He made really great speeches on the smallest amendments, so much so that it was remarked that he seemed to consider it not a Rating but a *pero*-rating Bill. Sir Robert Finlay, the Solicitor-General, was frequently put up to elucidate the more obscure and technical provisions, and greatly distinguished himself. I remember on one occasion Sir William Harcourt arose and dexterously turned one of the clauses of the Bill inside out, making it look particularly ridiculous. Mr Chaplin responded in a great speech, which left the House very much where it was before. When he sat down the following conversation was overheard on the Treasury Bench.

Mr Chaplin :—“Was that all right, Arthur?”

Mr Balfour :—“Excellent, Harry, old chap, excellent!” Then leaning over to the Solicitor-General, “I think, Finlay, you had better get up now and explain the clause.” Sir Robert accordingly caught the Chairman's eye, and in a few sentences made every-

thing perfectly clear, showing the absurdity of Sir W. Harcourt's argument.

Mr Balfour:—"First-rate, Finlay; at last I perceive the advantages of a legal training." Mr Balfour, it should be explained, was supposed to have a very poor opinion of the legal profession.

The night before the Whitsuntide recess the Committee stage was not half finished. But the Government determined to get it through. We met at 3, the usual time, though members, who like myself were serving on committees, had been at the House since 12. We sat right through the night, and finished up finally at 1.30 P.M. the next day. Obstructive scenes and dilatory motions were of frequent occurrence, but the Government persevered and the party supported them. A curious coincidence occurred—the Great Wheel at Earl's Court, then the latest London novelty, stopped that night when a large number of people were up in it. They had to stay in mid-air till the morning. Among them was an M.P., whose family and constituents believe to this day that he was in his place at the House all night. The experience of these people must have been unpleasant, as the night was cold and wet. But they were better off than we were, as when they returned to earth they received breakfast and £5 apiece. We, on the other hand, were nearly starved, as a late sitting had not been expected, and about midnight the refreshment department was completely eaten out. Members' wives were in much perturbation, one wiring to her husband in the morning to know if he was still at the House. It is difficult to see what answer she would have received if he had not been. Another arrived at daybreak with a hamper containing an excellent breakfast. Altogether

thirty divisions took place, and when at last we adjourned we felt we had earned our Whitsuntide holiday.

The later stages of the Rating Bill were uneventful. We had another late sitting to complete the Report stage. But as we were home by 9 A.M. the next morning, we thought nothing of it after our recent experience. The Bill had a swift and easy passage through the Lords, and received the Royal Assent. Temporary as it was, it has been renewed for short periods ever since, and is the law to-day ; and though the benefit conferred on agriculture was not large, it has helped many a farmer to make both ends meet, and it is not likely that even a Radical Government will venture to repeal it.

If the Government, however, were successful in getting through their Rating Bill, it was far otherwise with the Education Bill. The measure of which Sir John Gorst had given so cursory a description turned out to be an immense Bill, long and complicated, revolutionising in many respects the system of elementary education which had existed since 1870. Each county and county borough was to appoint an Education Committee, which would be the paramount education authority in the area, and would supervise all schools, elementary and secondary alike. The grants would be paid through them. The School Boards, many of whom had been giving what was in fact secondary education at the cost of the ratepayers would be subjected to the new authorities, who could place a limit to the rate they levied. The "intolerable strain" on the Voluntary schools was to be relieved by an aid grant of 4s. for every child in average attendance, and a similar grant was to be given to necessitous

Board schools. Finally, the religious difficulty was to be settled by the famous Clause 27, which enacted that wherever a "reasonable" number of parents demanded it, separate religious instruction in accordance with their views was to be given in all elementary schools alike. In this way the injustice felt by Nonconformists in places where there was only one school—and that a Church of England school — would be removed, and similarly the greater injustice felt by members of the Church of England and Roman Catholics in places where there was only a Board school in which they could obtain "undenominational" religion only, though they actually contributed to these schools as ratepayers.

When the provisions of the Bill became known, a perfect storm of opposition was aroused. The National Union of Teachers met and condemned it chiefly on account of the limiting of the School Board rate, which would tend to stop the progressive increase of salaries. The Nonconformist conscience was violently stirred, the Nonconformists being resolutely opposed to Clause 27, whereby the parson would be admitted to the Board schools (*their* schools as they regarded them), though they were most anxious to gain access to the Church schools, or at least to exclude him from them. They also strongly objected to the aid grant, which would assist the Voluntary schools in their financial struggles, and postpone their abolition, for which they had worked so long. The School Boards in the great towns, moreover, very powerful bodies as they were, were indignant at the proposal to subject them to the Town Councils—and indeed it was not a very convenient arrangement in places like Leeds or Birmingham, where the School Board

area and borough boundaries were identical, however well it might have worked in the counties. Still more cumbrous would such an arrangement have proved in London; and Metropolitan Conservatives were not allured by the prospect of subjecting the London School Board, on which there had generally been a "Moderate" and Church majority in recent years, to the London County Council, which was always dominated by the Progressives and Radicals. Lastly, many churchmen were dissatisfied with the aid grant of 4s., which they held was insufficient to relieve the financial strain. Some, indeed, especially in Lancashire and the North, held that "State aid" was useless altogether, and loudly demanded aid from the rates. This was the view taken by the Convocation of the northern provinces, and championed in the *Times* newspaper and House of Commons by Lord Cranborne. A special meeting of the Church Committee was held, at which Lord Cranborne proposed it; but it obtained little support, the wiser heads agreeing with the Bishop of London (Temple), who wrote about this period that it would be better for the Church to surrender some of the schools, "than that they should put the whole body of Church schools on the slippery slope of support from the rates." In view of what subsequently occurred, one cannot help regretting that Dr Temple did not adhere to this opinion in 1902.

Notwithstanding the fierce antagonism of the Opposition, and very little enthusiasm on our side, the second reading was carried by a majority of no less than 267, the Irish Nationalists throwing in their lot with the Government on behalf of the Roman Catholic schools in England, much to the fury and indignation of the Dissenters, who roundly

declared that the Liberal-Nationalist alliance was ended, and that Home Rule was dead. The debate was long and dull, the two representatives of the teachers, Messrs Gray and Yoxall, speaking at great length from opposite sides of the House, as they always did, though they were in agreement in endeavouring to advance the interests of their profession. This attitude they maintained with great ability throughout the Committee stage.

Before the Committee could be begun, however, we had passed the Whitsuntide recess. The prospects of the Bill had become very gloomy—to attempt to get through so big a business at so late a period of the session seemed hopeless, and the events of the few first days in Committee made the position worse and worse. The Opposition were obstructing with vigour, and our own friends were very loquacious. Several amendments were moved from the Unionist benches and debated at length. Then a most unhappy incident occurred. Sir Albert Rollit, the Conservative member for Islington, who was a great supporter of Municipal government, moved an amendment that not merely county boroughs, but all boroughs should appoint local Education committees. Sir John Gorst opposed the amendment as being calculated to upset the scheme of the Bill, and introduce an embarrassing multiplication of authorities. The debate, however, was prolonged, and became a trial of strength between the borough members on the one side, and the county members on the other. Towards the close of the evening Mr Balfour entered the House (he had been absent during Sir A. Rollit's and Sir J. Gorst's speeches), and, to everybody's astonishment, proceeded to throw over Sir John and to accept

the amendment so far as boroughs of 20,000 population and over were concerned. The discussion continued, and the House adjourned in bewilderment, with that strange feeling in the air that a crisis was imminent.

Before the discussion was resumed, a meeting of the party was summoned at the Carlton Club. Now, of all futile expedients, party meetings always struck me as being the most futile. There is a large gathering of members of both Houses, anxious to get through the business with as much despatch as possible. A few minutes late the leader of the party arrives, escorted by his principal lieutenants, and his private secretary, the Chief Whip being well to the fore. Applause greets him, and he proceeds to expound the object of the meeting, which usually is how to extricate the party from some tangle into which they have been got in the House of Commons. His plan may be good or it may be bad, but it is equally applauded; and when he resumes his seat, three or four old and quite reliable M.P.'s, coming from different parts of the country, arise and express their entire approval. Their parts have been well rehearsed. Possibly, however, there are some present who doubt the wisdom of the plan, but if they attempt to say so they are voted bores, and probably refused a hearing by the majority, who are eager either to show their loyalty or to get to lunch, or both. This is exactly what happened on the present occasion. The immense majority of the party were absolutely loyal to Mr Balfour and quite rightly, notwithstanding the fact that his leadership during the present session had not always been happy, and their loyalty blinded them to the fact that the plan of campaign which he now propounded was a perfectly

impossible one. He suggested that Parliament should be adjourned, not prorogued, in August till early in January, that the Education Bill should be hung up meantime and should then be concluded, and that Parliament should be prorogued in time to begin a new session in March. It was perfectly clear that if this were done, the Opposition could easily prolong the discussion on the Education Bill until the exigencies of Supply compelled the Government to drop it and begin a new session, and that they would certainly do so, especially as Mr Balfour announced that the Government would not closure the measure by compartments. But at the meeting Mr Leonard Courtney alone lifted up his voice in opposition to what appeared an obviously absurd proposition to all of us directly we had left the portals of the Carlton Club, and unfortunately Mr Courtney was not the most popular member of the party.

A week more of the Committee stage ensued, during which the Government fared worse and worse. Endless amendments were moved and discussed, all on the first clause, many of them arising out of the unfortunate concession which Mr Balfour had made to Sir Albert Rollit. A Tory member, Major Banes, made a violent speech against the Bill, inveighing strongly against clerical influence. "I never have a parson on my platform," he said; "if I see one there, I put him off." On the last day Sir John Kennaway, one of the most respected members in the House, and the leader of the more evangelical section of churchmen, appealed to the Government to drop the Bill. Sir John had afterwards the reputation of having killed it. As a matter of fact he only fired the final shot. The following Monday, exactly one week since the Carlton Club meeting, Mr Balfour announced

the abandonment of the measure. Sir William Harcourt sounded a long note of triumph, and the Education Bill of 1896 disappeared or ever.

It was a great triumph for the Opposition. Less than a year ago they had come back from the country in a hopeless minority, discredited and beaten: now they had compelled the strongest Government of modern times to drop the principal measure of their first session. It was also a great misfortune to the Unionist cause and to the Voluntary schools. Some of the proposals were crude and ill thought out, and the aid grant of 4s. was inadequate, but, taken altogether, it was an excellent measure and capable of great improvement, and, had it been carried, the education question might have been finally settled in 1896. It decentralised the Education Department, thus foreshadowing the best and probably most permanent part of the Act of 1902. It placed the settlement of the religious difficulty on the only sure basis—which must inevitably be adopted in the long run—viz., the wishes of the parents. It attempted to limit School Board extravagance, and the destructive competition with Voluntary schools. Lastly, in assisting the latter, it avoided the colossal error of aid from the rates. Its loss was unwept at the time, but I cannot help feeling now how far better we should have fared if the Government had succeeded in passing it.

In another matter things went badly. The Government had already carried the second reading of their Irish Land Bill, which was intended to be a mere amendment of the Act of 1881; but in the opinion of the Irish landlords it went much further, and proposed, in fact, to transfer a little more of their property to the tenants. As one of their representatives remarked, “Mr Gladstone took our coats,

and now Mr Gerald Balfour is going to take our waistcoats." In the long interval which had ensued since second reading, the Government had been made aware of these views, and Mr Gerald Balfour had put down a number of amendments to meet the landlords' wishes. Now, however, the Nationalists were up in arms, and the Chief Secretary proceeded to intimate to them that he would not press his amendments!

The result was, of course, a terrible row. Sir William Harcourt moved the adjournment of the House in order to ascertain the Government's real intentions as to the Bill, and Mr Morley not unnaturally asked if they had any views at all on the matter. Mr Balfour was absent, and Mr Chamberlain, who was temporarily leading, was not in a position to make any complete statement. In the end, however, the Government decided to proceed with the Bill, Mr Balfour stating that only four days could be given to the Committee stage.

Four days accordingly were given, and four very long days they were, the House sitting nearly all night every night. We English members, who were not directly interested, used to spend much of the time on the terrace, and on several beautiful summer mornings we watched the sun rise over St Thomas's Hospital. But inside the House there were lively scenes. The landlord party fought hard, assisted by that clever lawyer, Mr Carson, while several English Conservative members joined in the attack on the Government, notably Lord Cranborne, the Premier's own son, taking a higher Tory line than the Government dared to do. Mr Carson displayed much acerbity of temper, and, on one occasion, marched out of the House in high dudgeon, after remarking

that the Government evidently did not mean to give any consideration to the views of his friends, and, on another, he made a fierce attack on Mr Balfour, whose right-hand man he had been in the days of resolute government in Ireland.

The Bill, however, got through the Commons—to be altered almost out of recognition in the House of Lords. The Government, indeed, had shown little judgment in failing to ascertain the views of their supporters before introducing it. It is believed that the Irish Secretary submitted it to the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Lansdowne, two members of the Cabinet who had Irish estates, but these noblemen were not dependent on their Irish property for their incomes, and did not apparently understand the position of those who were. A collision between the two Houses ensued, the majority in the Commons fully sympathising with the majority in the Lords against the Government. A compromise was at last effected, and a Bill was passed which robbed the landlords without satisfying the tenants. This was the first essay of Mr Gerald Balfour in the policy of killing Home Rule by kindness, which, in the hands of his successor, nearly ended in killing Unionism.

The session was now practically over, and if Mr Balfour had failed to carry his measures, he succeeded in proroguing in good time for the holidays. The position of the Government in the House of Commons was certainly far weaker at the end of the session than it was at the beginning, and many were the complaints against Mr Balfour's leadership. There seemed to be a lack of grip and want of knowledge of the feelings of the rank and file, and although the Government was strong in the

persons of its individual members, collectively it appeared to be without definite guidance. Each Minister seemed to live in a watertight compartment by himself and to run his own office, but there was no co-ordination of policy. At the same time Mr Balfour's personal popularity was undiminished, and he had shown on many occasions unexampled dexterity in getting out of tight places. Mr Chamberlain's position had been greatly enhanced by his prompt and vigorous action in connection with the Jameson Raid; but his attempt to induce President Kruger, who really held all the cards, to grant reasonable political rights to the Outlanders in the Transvaal had proved a failure, and not even his best friends could hold that his "new diplomacy," by which some of his despatches were published in London before they could reach South Africa, was a success. To Lord Salisbury belongs most of the credit of the year. Under his guidance the difficulties and dangers which threatened us in the beginning had disappeared. The trouble with Venezuela and the United States was settled. The German Emperor was bitterly regretting his telegram. It is true that the Sultan still massacred Armenians; and we were powerless to intervene without the Concert of Europe, and the Concert refused to play. We should have been quixotic indeed to have rushed in where the Concert feared to tread. Lastly, the Nile expedition, whatever its object, had been an immense success. General Kitchener had advanced rapidly, won two pitched battles, and occupied Dongola. Nothing now prevented his further advance to Khartoum. One other important event may be noted. A meeting took place in June, of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, over which Mr Chamberlain presided.

At this meeting he advocated a scheme of Imperial Preference, suggesting the imposition of moderate duties on foreign articles coming here which the Colonies could produce, and asking the Colonies for some discrimination in their markets in our favour. The proposal was favourably received, although it was clear that the question was not yet ripe for discussion.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SESSION OF 1897

PARLIAMENT was called together very early this year. In abandoning the Education Bill of 1896, Mr Balfour had promised to bring in a short measure giving financial aid to the Voluntary schools, and to pass it as early as possible. The promise was scrupulously kept, and we met on January 19.

Several events of importance had occurred in the recess. The American intervention in our dispute with Venezuela had ended in the conclusion of a treaty for general arbitration with the United States, which, as Lord Salisbury said, though it might not "put a stop to war—for it could not restrain a Napoleon or a Bismarck—would at all events diminish the risk of war between the two countries."

In the Near East things had gone from bad to worse, the Sultan, in pursuance of his Pan-Islamic policy, having ordered or permitted wholesale massacres of Armenians in Constantinople itself. An indirect result of this was the resignation of Lord Rosebery from the leadership of the Liberal Party. Indignation meetings against the action of the Sultan were held all over the country, and the Government were strongly urged to intervene to put an end to these horrors. Mr Gladstone once more came out from his retirement and addressed a great

meeting in Liverpool, and while disclaiming all desire to make the movement a party one, demanded that we should act vigorously against the Porte, beginning by recalling our ambassador from Constantinople. Almost alone in his party Lord Rosebery saw the futility and danger of isolated action on our part. In an eloquent speech at Edinburgh he explained his position, at the same time making it clear that his strained relations with Sir W. Harcourt and the patent disloyalty to him of a large section of the party had contributed largely to his decision.

The managers of the Liberal Federation decided not to fill the vacant place. The effective leadership was taken up by Sir W. Harcourt, whose authority, however, was not unchallenged. Lord Kimberley was acknowledged leader in the House of Lords; but in fact there was no judge in Israel, and every Radical did that which was right in his own eyes.

In the month of November a great conference of churchmen was held at the Church House, to consider the Education Question. The Archbishop of York presided, the vacancy at Canterbury caused by the lamented and premature death of Archbishop Benson not having been formally filled, though Dr Temple was present as Archbishop-designate. The members of both Convocations and of both Houses of Laymen were summoned; it was, in fact, a Representative Church Council in embryo. Dr Temple moved the principal resolutions, the first of which asked for State-aid to the Voluntary schools, in the shape of a grant of 6s. per child; the second, aid from the rates. He had apparently allowed his former strong objections to the "slippery slope" to be overruled, and many churchmen followed his example, having the greatest

confidence in his judgment, of whom I must own that I was one. Very long discussions ensued, lasting two days, Lord Cross and many of the older school protesting strongly against rate-aid, and pointing out its dangers. In the end the Archbishop of York made the extraordinary request that though we might differ from each other *toto cælo* in fact, and might say what we liked directly we left the room, we should at all events preserve the semblance of unanimity within the walls of the Church House. It was very ridiculous, but we assented. Such was the authority of an Archbishop; the resolutions were carried *nem. con.*, upon which the Archbishop remarked that "he announced to the Government and to the world" that we had unanimously agreed to the scheme.

The Queen's Speech was a modest document. After referring to foreign affairs, it put forth a very slender legislative programme, in striking contrast to the resurrected Newcastle Programmes of the late Goverment. The principal measures promised were the Education Bill and the Workmen's Compensation Bill. The seconder of the Address was Mr Alfred Lyttelton, then a comparatively new member—he had been elected for Leamington after the resignation of Speaker Peel. After the debate I overheard Mr John Burns remark that he was better at cricket than speech-making, but in the opinion of most members he was not a bad performer at the latter game either. The general debate in the House of Commons was particularly uninstructive, but in the Lords, Lord Salisbury, referring to the Eastern Question, made the celebrated remark that in our past policy (dating from the Crimean War) we had "put our money on the wrong horse": which pointed to a complete

reversal of our traditional policy in future. One exciting debate took place on the release of four dynamitards from prison by the Home Secretary (Sir M. White-Ridley). It will be remembered that four years earlier Mr Asquith had won great kudos by refusing to release any of these gentlemen. Now Daly and three others had been released, but, as the Home Secretary explained, on medical grounds only. The affair, however, looked suspicious, and Sir Henry Howorth, a voluminous writer though an infrequent speaker in the House, moved an amendment to the Address condemning the action of the Home Secretary.

Sir Henry has a caustic wit and a biting tongue, which he can use with effect when he wants, and his speech lashed Mr Balfour and the loyal Ministerialists into fury. It is true that throughout he was careful to say that no reflections were intended on Sir M. White-Ridley's honour, but only on his judgment. Mr Balfour could not see it in this light. "The imputation he has made," Mr Balfour exclaimed, "was unworthy of a member of the party to which he belongs." In marked contrast to this violent outburst the Home Secretary, in a carefully reasoned speech, succeeded the next day in completely justifying his action.

A touch of comicality was given to the debate by Mr Sidney Gedge, a well-known London solicitor, who rose amid cries of "divide" to defend Sir Henry Howorth. "His hon. friend," he said, "had not deserved the severe trouncing he had got. The First Lord had evidently acted on the old principle that when you have no case you should abuse the plaintiff"—"attorney," shouted the Ministerialists amid much laughter, with an obvious

allusion to the speaker's profession, and little else of Mr Gedge's speech was audible. Thus does the mother of Parliaments often behave like a pack of schoolboys. Sir Henry's motion was negatived without a division.

The new Education Bill—or the Voluntary Schools Bill as it was rightly called—came next upon the scene, and, being a money Bill, was introduced in Committee of Ways and Means in the form of a resolution. The new measure was a mere infant compared with its predecessor of the year before. It only proposed to give an aid grant, calculated at the rate of 5s. a child in average attendance, to the Voluntary schools, and to allow these schools to be grouped in associations for the purpose of distributing the new grant to the best advantage. No fresh attempt was made to reform the general system of education. The Bill was directed solely to relieving the "intolerable strain." Mr Balfour himself expounded the scheme in a lucid speech, and it at once became clear that Sir John Gorst was not to be in charge of the measure; the fiasco of last year being apparently set down by the Government to his want of dexterity as a Parliamentary pilot. To independent members this appeared a rather severe judgment, many being of opinion that if the First Lord had allowed Sir John to manage his Bill in his own way things would have fared better, and surprise was generally expressed that he was willing to retain office after receiving such a slight. The more he was brushed on one side, however, the more he appeared to glory in his position, continually referring to himself by the long circumlocution of "Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education," at which the House laughed hilariously.

The reception of the Bill was not favourable. Educationists were disappointed that it did not attempt to grapple with some, at least, of the great questions raised by the Bill of 1896—*e.g.*, the decentralisation of the Education Department, and the co-ordination of schools. The Church Party, headed by Lord Cranborne, accepted it as a mere instalment of better things, and as partially tiding over the financial difficulty for the moment. The Opposition loudly proclaimed that the Government, having given doles to the landlords last year, were proceeding to give doles to the parsons this year (though it is difficult to see how the aid grant could go into the parish priest's pocket), and demanded “popular control” as an accompaniment to the new grant. Notwithstanding this, the second reading was carried by a majority of 205, the Irish Nationalists present again supporting the Government.

Now occurred a remarkable Parliamentary feat on the part of Mr Balfour. The Bill was short and simple, but it was sure to be violently obstructed, which would render it difficult to get it through in time to enable the schools to obtain relief during the current year. To ensure this result, the First Lord proceeded to take all the time of the House—a most unusual course before Easter or even before Whitsuntide—and then to refuse to accept any amendment at all in Committee. The result of this was that the Report stage was avoided, and the passage of the Bill accelerated. It was, no doubt, rather ignominious to be obliged to resort to such tactics, which destroyed the deliberative character of the House altogether for the time, reducing it to a mere voting machine; but they were justified by their success.

The Committee stage was concluded early in March, and the third reading passed on the 25th. An easy passage through the Lords was assured. Thus did the Government fulfil their promises to the managers of the Voluntary schools, and defeat the obstruction of the Opposition. Confidence in Mr Balfour's leadership was restored.

The Committee stage, however, had not been without incident. The most remarkable feature was that the attack on the Bill was conducted almost entirely by Welsh members, who displayed a fertility in debate and ingenuity in framing amendments equalled only by their rancorous hostility to the Church. In ability and in bitterness Messrs Lloyd-George, Ellis Griffith, and S. T. Evans vied with each other, Mr Lloyd-George certainly taking the palm for violence of language. Indeed, many of his friends who recognised his remarkable Parliamentary gifts, and admired the pluck and grit which he had displayed since he entered the House, often deplored his language, which they feared would militate against his future success. They did not appreciate the degradation of tone which the House had already suffered through Radical imitation of Nationalist methods. The English Liberals, on the other hand, nearly effaced themselves, and it must be confessed that with one or two exceptions they were not a strong lot. On March 10 a curious incident occurred, which is characteristic as showing how little things upset the serenity of the great Chamber. In those days when there was no regular dinner interval, the Speaker or the Chairman, as it might be, used to go out for half an hour as near eight o'clock as possible, to obtain some slight refreshment. During his absence a suspension of the sitting took place, and

members engaged in the debate rushed out to get what dinner they could in the short time allowed them. On this particular night, however, Mr J. W. Lowther (the Chairman), whether because it was Lent and he was fasting, or because he heroically determined to sacrifice his dinner for the laudable object of saving time, determined to sit right on, and no interval took place. The result was that instead of time being saved, much valuable time was lost, Mr Caldwell and others vigorously protesting against the infringement of the Constitution which had been perpetrated.

A few days later the Committee stage was interrupted by an absurd motion for adjournment. The War Office had notified that a certain volunteer regiment, the 3rd Battalion Scottish Rifles, which had been badly reported on for some years, was to be disbanded. In consequence of this, Mr J. Wilson, the Unionist M.P. for Falkirk, asked leave to move the adjournment on a definite matter of urgency—the urgency consisting in the fact that “the fatal step,” as Mr Wilson called it, was to take place on April 1—“a foolish day on which to do a foolish deed.” He, of course, obtained the permission of the House to proceed; the Opposition, as all Oppositions do, rising as a man to enable any motion to be brought forward which would consume a little Government time. Mr Wilson’s case, however, was a very weak one, and was torn to shreds by Mr Brodrick, who showed that the battalion had no colonel, as no colonel could be got to take it; that the late colonel was in the habit of selling the free grants of ammunition made by Government (a practice which Mr Wilson appeared to regard as common, if not laudable); that the men, though of

good physique, were always badly turned out and dirty on parade ; that scarcely any of the officers knew their work, and that one had admitted that he did not know a single word of command ; that several of them were publicans, whose houses the men frequented, and who, in addition to commanding their companies, supplied the canteen ; and lastly, that on one occasion some of the men paraded in carpet slippers, and when the adjutant called the attention of the officer in command to this, he said he saw "nothing amiss." This last revelation settled the matter, and Mr Wilson's Royal Slipper Brigade was laughed out of the House to be disbanded on the following April Fool's Day. The House proceeded to the Orders of the day.

This debate showed the House of Commons in its best and worst aspect ; its worst as regards the individual member ; its best in its collective action. Mr Wilson was compelled by his constituents—many of whom were these very volunteers—to bring the matter forward, though he must have known that his case would not bear investigation, and that the War Office was right in its decision. In the same way other members have had perforce to advocate the claims of their constituents as against the interests of the State, and will have to again. Although, however, every member feels that he may be placed in the same awkward position himself, the House as a body pays little attention to such advocacy : and in these cases the collective action of the House generally coincides with the public good. It is only when a particular kind of pressure can be placed by constituents on a large number of members that danger arises, which is the strongest argument against the increase of Government employees, especially such

as are spread all over the country, as the Postal employees are, unless means are taken, as in some Continental states, to give them special representation, thus withdrawing their influence from the ordinary constituencies.

The session of 1897 was marked by four other important questions, which occupied much time in the House—the Cretan Question, the financial relations of England and Ireland, the Workmen's Compensation Act, and the proceedings of the South African Committee. The middle of the session was quite overshadowed by the loyal rejoicings in connection with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, in which not merely the people of this country took part, but also the representatives of all our Colonies. I will proceed to deal with these various topics in order.

For many years the state of Crete had been one of practical civil war between the Christian and Mussulman subjects of the Sultan. The latter potentate was pursuing his favourite game of playing off the various powers against each other with consummate skill, with the result that the Concert of Europe was as impotent in Crete as in Armenia or anywhere else. Suddenly, in the early days of 1897, affairs came to a head. A rather worse insurrection than usual, in which the Christians were everywhere defeated, led to the intervention of the King of Greece, who despatched his son, Prince George, with a torpedo flotilla to aid the Christian insurgents. The serenity of the European Concert was rudely disturbed, and at Lord Salisbury's suggestion an allied fleet under an Italian admiral was sent to watch events, and to prevent hostilities between the Greeks and the Turks. The Greeks, however, paid as little attention to the Concert as did the Sultan, and the King's personal

aide-de-camp, Colonel Vassos, landed in Crete with 2000 troops under the very eyes of the allied fleet, and being joined by the insurgents proclaimed the annexation of Crete to the Hellenic Kingdom. King George and Colonel Vassos at once became the popular idols of the Radical Party. A furore ran through the sentimental section of the country which recalled Byronic days. The question was naturally raised in both Houses, and so delighted with Colonel Vassos' exploit were the Radical M.P.'s that one hundred of them, much to the general amusement, signed a round robin, which they telegraphed to the King of Greece, approving of his conduct. Meanwhile the debates revealed that Lord Salisbury had a most difficult part to play. If he acted with the Concert, it was probable that nothing would be done. If he acted without it, we should probably involve ourselves in a European war. But these considerations did not deter the Radicals from raising the question repeatedly in the House of Commons. Some of them, like Mr Bryce, were perfectly honest sentimentalists, always more concerned for the welfare of other nations than for that of our own people; but the majority looked upon the Cretan business, as they had done on the Armenian massacres, as a way of embarrassing the Government. In this they were signally unsuccessful, the House and the country having implicit confidence in Lord Salisbury's wise diplomacy. Their action, however, created a false impression of England's attitude abroad, and the telegram of the hundred members, ridiculous as it was, undoubtedly contributed to the disastrous war upon which Greece embarked with Turkey a few weeks later.

During the recess the Royal Commission, which

had been appointed by Mr Gladstone to inquire into the financial relations between England and Ireland, so as to ascertain what contribution Ireland ought to make to the Imperial Exchequer in the event of Home Rule becoming law, had made their report, from which it appeared that if Ireland were treated as a separate fiscal entity, and taxed according to her taxable capacity, she was paying far more than her share now, and had been doing so for many years. The publication of this document caused the greatest excitement, and had the effect of uniting all Irishmen in a way they had never been united before, Unionists and Orangemen vying with Parnellites, Anti-Parnellites, and priests in demanding large remissions of taxation. Three days—three very dull days for the private secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had to sit all through the debates—were allotted by Mr Balfour to the discussion in the House of Commons, which was opened by Mr Blake, ex-Leader of the Liberal Party in Canada, and now Anti-Parnellite member for Longford, in a portentously long speech of over two hours' duration. He was answered by Mr Whittaker, a Radical member and prominent temperance advocate, who made one of the best debating speeches I ever heard in the House. He showed that the system of taxation in Ireland was exactly the same as in every other part of the United Kingdom, except that in Ireland there were certain exemptions which did not apply elsewhere, so that in this respect Ireland was better off—that it would be absurd to separate the two exchequers unless Home Rule were passed, and that Ireland's grievance was shared by all the poorer parts of the country, whose taxable capacity, if it could be obtained, was very much less than that of the richer

parts, yet nobody suggested a separate fiscal system for the agricultural districts of England. The same view was expressed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in an admirable speech, who further promised a second Commission to inquire into what additional remissions could be made to Ireland, thus showing his anxiety to deal fairly and even generously in the matter. But this did not satisfy the Irish. Colonel Saunderson and Mr Lecky supported the motion, while Sir Edward Clarke, who was beginning to take a very independent line on all questions, expressed the same view. At the end of the third night's debate a division was taken almost entirely on party lines, and Mr Blake's motion was rejected by a large majority only to recur again every succeeding session, while Sir M. Hicks-Beach's new Commission was never appointed, since the Nationalists refused to serve upon it.

Directly after Easter the Budget was introduced, and appeared to be almost entirely non-contentious. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach excelled himself in his Budget statement on April 28, but while it was clear that the country was exceedingly prosperous, disappointment was felt that he could not propose any substantial decrease of taxation. Of his surplus of a million and a half, a large portion had to go to the increase of the Navy, while most of the rest was expended in various minor postal reforms, and a small sum of £200,000 was voted for increasing the very weak garrison in South Africa by one battalion of infantry and three batteries of artillery! In view of subsequent events this increase seems trivial enough, but it caused Sir William Harcourt to make a violent attack on Mr Chamberlain, charging the latter with threatening war on the Transvaal. This

attitude of the regular Opposition all through the years which preceded the war must be borne in mind when criticisms are made on the Government for their lack of military preparation at its outbreak in 1899.

The introduction of the Workmen's Compensation Bill, perhaps the most notable achievement of the Unionist Government during their ten years' administration, followed, the Bill being in the charge of Sir M. White-Ridley, the Home Secretary, though it was obviously inspired by Mr Chamberlain. It was based upon the proposals made by him in discussing Mr Asquith's Bill of 1893, that compensation should be given for all accidents suffered by men in the course of their employment, no question being raised as to whether the accident was due to the employee's own fault or not, while contracting out was to be allowed provided the terms were pronounced by the Registrar of Friendly Societies to be as favourable as those in the Bill. Being in the nature of an experiment, the Bill was only to apply to certain dangerous trades, the existing Employers' Liability Acts remaining unrepealed. The measure was favourably received, though Mr Asquith not unnaturally expressed a preference for the plan of his own abortive Bill. As Mr Chamberlain showed, however, Mr Asquith's Bill would only have applied to about 30 per cent. of the workmen in the country, whereas this, notwithstanding its restriction to dangerous trades, would apply to over 60 per cent. The second reading was carried *nem. con.*, but when the Committee stage was reached a determined attempt was made by some employers, chiefly on the Radical side, to smother the Bill with amendments, and to whittle away its provisions. Conspicuous in this effort were Mr Emerson

Bainbridge and Sir James Joicey, both members of that party which always boasts of its affection for the working man. The Government, urged on by Mr Chamberlain, however, persisted, and the Bill was got through Committee before Whitsuntide. Its subsequent career was not quite so uneventful. On the Report stage a lively debate took place on an amendment which had been introduced in Committee to the contracting-out clause, to the effect that if any part of the money payable under a scheme were not forthcoming, the employers should make it good. A Tory revolt to this was led by Mr Wolff—the great Belfast shipbuilder—and Mr Cripps, K.C., who, although he had only entered the House in 1895, had already made a great reputation. In the subsequent discussion, Mr Asquith taunted the Government with having deserted the principle of freedom of contract, a view which Mr Chamberlain and Mr Balfour stoutly denied. Many Conservatives, however, objected to the provision, which was debated for two days and divided upon. In the Lords it was summarily rejected, Lord Londonderry in particular opposing it as he did many other sections of the Bill. Another conflict between the Houses on the subject of Employers' Liability seemed at one time inevitable, but was averted by the strong support given to the Bill by Lord Salisbury, and the acceptance of this and many other of the Lords' amendments by the House of Commons. Thus was carried what has been called the Workmen's Charter, one of the most useful pieces of social legislation ever passed by either political party, which made compensation for accidents to employees a charge upon the business, similar to the wear and tear of plant and machinery.

To Mr Chamberlain belongs the chief credit, and just as his Colonial policy was reviving the Imperial sentiment evoked by Lord Beaconsfield's Foreign policy, so his progressive Home policy recalled the Factory and Housing legislation of which Lord Shaftesbury and Mr Disraeli had been the chief authors thirty years before. When he entered the Government in 1895, Mr Chamberlain was still greatly mistrusted by the Tory rank and file, but a new feeling was springing up, and it was being universally recognised that he was the strong man of the Government.

Somehow or other, whatever he did he seemed to be always in the forefront, as was exemplified by the one other important matter which came before us in the present session. Dr Jameson and the chief officers who led the Raid had been tried a year ago, and committed to gaol for various terms of imprisonment; and towards the close of last session the Government, in fulfilment of a pledge given by Mr Chamberlain, appointed a Select Committee to consider all the circumstances connected with the Raid. The Committee was a very strong body, including among others, Mr Chamberlain himself, Sir M. Hicks-Beach, Sir William Harcourt, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, and Mr Labouchere; and Mr Jackson was appointed Chairman. The recess, however, prevented its getting to business in 1896, and it was reappointed. Its proceedings were interesting, and at times exciting, and were attended by many private members of the House, of whom I was occasionally one. Mr Rhodes "faced the music" bravely, admitting that he was privy to and had in fact planned the insurrection at Johannesburg which did not come off, but stating that the actual Raid was

contrary to his orders. In fact, Dr Jameson had "upset his apple-cart." The chief interest, however, was centred upon the position of Mr Chamberlain and the Colonial Office; Mr Chamberlain having been charged by many Radicals, more indeed by way of innuendo and suggestion than by open utterance, of having been in Mr Rhodes' secrets. This the Colonial Secretary stoutly denied, and not a shred of evidence was produced in its support. An air of suspicion surrounded the proceedings, however, through the fact that Mr Hawksley, Mr Rhodes' solicitor, refused to produce certain confidential telegrams which had passed between him and Mr Rhodes, and the Committee refused to take any steps to compel their production. Following on this the Committee presented a report, which to the ordinary mind certainly appeared inconclusive. They condemned the Raid, they condemned Mr Rhodes in strong terms, they entirely exonerated the Colonial Office and the High Commissioner in South Africa, and they justified their action in refusing to compel Mr Hawksley to produce the telegrams on the ground that they could not have been obtained without great delay. This Report was signed by all the members of the Committee, including the Opposition leaders (Sir William Harcourt and Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman), except Mr Blake and Mr Labouchere. The last named presented a separate and far stronger report of his own, in which, however, he absolved Mr Chamberlain and the Colonial Office from complicity with Mr Rhodes' designs, while expressing regret that the matter, through the non-production of the telegrams, had not been probed to the bottom. As was to be expected, the publication of the Report was debated in the House of Commons, a preliminary

canter taking place on the Colonial Office vote, when Mr Arnold Forster, who had a reputation for universal knowledge, and was regarded as an expert on South African and many other subjects, made a violent attack on the Government and the Chartered Company, which was warmly resented by Mr Balfour. A day was subsequently set apart, and a remarkable debate ensued on a motion of Mr Philip Stanhope, which was practically a vote of censure on the Committee. Mr Stanhope was supported by Mr Labouchere, but Sir William Harcourt and Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman supported the Government, as indeed they were bound to do as they had signed the report. At the end, Mr Chamberlain stated that though Mr Rhodes had committed a very grievous political fault, he had been guilty of nothing affecting his personal honour, which was thought a somewhat remarkable statement to make about a man who had been found guilty by the Committee of gross breaches of duty, of deceiving the High Commissioner, of concealing his views from his colleagues in the Cape Ministry, and so on. The House, however, accepted the situation by a large majority, and the matter remained, and remains to many people, an unsolved mystery, banished from our minds by the rapid progress of events in South Africa, which culminated in the war.

With the debate on the South African Committee's Report interest in the House came practically to a close, and the session actually ended early in August. It cannot be said that life in the House had been exciting; we had, in fact, entered upon a dull period which lasted up to the South African War. The Government had not exactly

lost strength—they had really done much better this session than last—but all enthusiasm for them had vanished. Their measures (with the solitary exception of the Workmen's Compensation Bill) were obviously of the makeshift and temporary expedient order, and with their great majority they appeared to be unable to settle anything, but only to tinker at many things. Mr Chamberlain, as has been stated, had stepped right out to the front; while, as a Parliamentary debater and as a man of backbone, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had maintained his reputation; and Mr Balfour had displayed his usual House of Commons dexterity. Sir M. White-Ridley had successfully conducted the Workmen's Compensation Bill. The rest of the Government had in no way distinguished themselves, and some members of it were lamentably weak. In the Lords, of course, Lord Salisbury was supreme, but in the Lower House he was personally unknown to the vast majority of his party, of whom he probably did not know one in ten by sight. The Opposition were in a similar condition, still much divided over the leadership; while the forward Radicals found even Sir W. Harcourt too backward for them. Altogether there was an air of listlessness, and attendance in the House was for the most part very slack. No doubt the largeness of the majority had something to do with it; the Diamond Jubilee with its attendant fêtes had something too. The Government, however, cannot be acquitted of timidity, and of allowing their halycon days of big majorities to pass by without making any serious effort to settle some of the great questions which were constantly coming before them.

Outside Parliament the most important event was the meeting of the Colonial Premiers, who had come

over to attend the Jubilee. A series of conferences was held, presided over by Mr Chamberlain, at which the possibility of closer political union and of commercial union by means of preferential trade relations was discussed, the matter having become urgent through the action of the Canadian Government in introducing a new tariff, granting a preference to the mother country, which appeared to be contrary to the existing treaties between Great Britain and Germany and Belgium, concluded at a time when the Colonies were held of no account by British statesmen. As a result, Lord Salisbury denounced these treaties.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SESSION OF 1898

IN the last chapter allusion was made to the dullness and listlessness which had come over the House of Commons towards the close of the session of 1897. This state of affairs was intensified in 1898, and life in Parliament became tedious in the extreme. Very few members attended the debates habitually, and those who did found little to interest them. Boredom was writ large over the whole place. The Government had an overwhelming majority, but nobody thought much or cared much for the Government. The Opposition were in a state of complete paralysis, having no recognised leader, and, though Sir William Harcourt continued to act as such, his position was only just tolerated by the still not inconsiderable Rosebery faction. If the House itself thought little of its debates, the country thought even less. The by-elections showed that the Government's popularity was on the downward grade, but not nearly so seriously as it had been after the Parliamentary fiasco of 1896. The fact is that the country was indifferent to both parties. This condition of affairs lasted right up to the outbreak of the Boer War, and had a General Election taken place before that momentous event, the Unionist Party would probably have been returned again, but by a considerably reduced majority.

In the meantime the lobbies were full of complaints of the prevailing dullness, and many members who had begun their Parliamentary existence three years before full of keenness and enthusiasm were seriously asking themselves whether the life with all its attendant discomforts was good enough.

The explanation is not far to seek. The House of Commons loves to get excited over home affairs—in which there is the perennial strife of parties—it can rarely rouse itself to any deep interest over foreign and colonial affairs. Its character is essentially parochial, the result of many years of domination by Mr Gladstone and the Manchester School. A little later Mr Chamberlain succeeded in lifting it—temporarily at anyrate—out of this groove, but he had not succeeded yet. In 1898 home affairs were a negligible quantity. The Government had done all they intended to do at present on the Rating and Education questions. On such matters as Bimetallism and the establishment of a Roman Catholic University in Ireland the Cabinet were divided, and they were, in consequence, outside the range of practical politics. As regards social legislation, Ministers had tried the patience of some of their more Conservative supporters to the uttermost by the Workmen's Compensation Act, and they would certainly attempt nothing more for some years. Home Rule was absolutely dead, and the Gladstonian Home Rulers were chiefly anxious to prove that they had never been Home Rulers at all. The principal measure of the session was the Irish Local Government Act, which Mr Gerald Balfour regarded as putting the finishing touch to his policy of beneficent rule within the Union, and which, as it was accompanied by a very large money grant, as a set-off to

the money spent in England on the Agricultural Rates Act, was, of course, accepted by the Nationalists, always willing to take anything they could get at any time and then to ask for more. A certain amount of discussion took place over the Benefices Act, which, however, was a small measure, and would have excited little attention but for the bitter animosity of the political dissenters, and especially of the Welsh Party, towards the Church. The internal affairs of the Church, to which attention was drawn by the unseemly protests against "Ritualism" of Mr Kensit, were also the cause of one or two debates in the House. For the rest, the extraordinary action of the Government on the Vaccination question alone produced any interest. From Home Rule and the abolition of the House of Lords to Vaccination and discussions on calf-lymph was somewhat of a descent for the Imperial Parliament.

Meanwhile, however, stirring events were going on abroad, especially in China. The disclosure, which the Japanese War had made, of the hopeless weakness of this colossus was the signal for every enterprising foreigner to rush in and peg out a claim for himself. The German Emperor naturally led the way in this piratical business and seized Kiao-Chow, sending thither his brother with the "mailed first," consisting of two very obsolete warships, but quite sufficiently up-to-date to destroy the whole Chinese Navy. It was known that Russia had designs on Manchuria and on Port Arthur, from which Japan had been ousted, and which it was surmised was meant to be the terminus of the trans-Siberian railway now under construction. Then France was agitating for something down South. Meanwhile we did nothing, and our influence at Pekin,

for reasons already explained, had reached a very low ebb. Yet our interests were by far the greatest. Our exports to China, especially of cotton goods, were enormous. The danger was that those foreign powers who seized ports or pieces of territory in China would carve out for themselves spheres of influence, and set up customs barriers against all imports except their own. This would be fatal to this country—even the straitest of the Manchester School admitting that the curtailment of neutral markets was intolerable, however wicked it might be to restrict the home market to home producers.

Thus arose the policy of the “open door”—as well expressed by Sir M. Hicks-Beach in a bold speech at Swansea just before the session, which he said should be maintained “even at the cost of war.” The action of the Government, however, did not seem to come up to their words, and very great anxiety was felt when Parliament met early in February. The Government had demanded that the port of Talienshan should be opened to the trade of the world, but Russia had violently opposed this, with the result that the demand was withdrawn, and our offer of a loan to China fell through. A short, but by no means satisfactory, debate on the subject occurred on the Address, when the time of the House was occupied as usual with the usual miscellany of questions, including the important subjects of West Africa, over which we had nearly come to blows with France, and the recent operations on the North-West Frontier of India. Meanwhile a new grouping of parties was taking place. The Chinese Question drove a wedge diagonally through both. The Little Englanders among the Radicals, headed by Mr Labouchere; loudly applauded Lord Salisbury’s

diplomacy, while the Liberal Imperialists and many others, whose sole object was to gain a party advantage, as loudly denounced it, and sneered at what were called his "graceful concessions" to foreign powers. They forgot that when they were in office their concessions were generally not graceful but disgraceful. On the Unionist side a large section openly disapproved of what appeared to be lamentable weakness, and a strong committee called the China Committee was formed to watch events, to ask questions, and generally to try to keep the Government up to the mark. The leader of this group was Mr Yerburgh, the member for Chester, an able man, who had by many years of party service earned that intangible thing called the "gratitude of the party," but who for all that remained on the back benches. Mr Yerburgh was keenly interested in China, and had acquired considerable knowledge of our interests there, and he was supported by several of the abler members of the Tory rank and file, Mr Ernest Beckett, Sir J Dickson-Poynder, Mr Vicary Gibbs, Mr Goulding, Mr Maclean, and others. We met frequently, and we dined together even more frequently, Mr Yerburgh being the most hospitable of leaders; but while we were dining events were moving. It happened that certain ships of the British China Squadron were wintering at Port Arthur, a very usual occurrence. The Russians objected to this, and M. de Stael, the Russian Ambassador in London, demanded their removal. To the astonishment of everybody, we consented. A few days later it was announced in the *Times* that Russia had obtained a lease from China of Port Arthur and Talienshan, and that she was proceeding to occupy them at once. Questioned on the subject, Mr

Curzon was unable to give any official confirmation or denial of the statement ; but the *Times* had been invariably ahead of the Foreign Office with its news, which, moreover, was singularly accurate. The excitement in the House was intense. War was freely talked about, but we all felt that it was too late, and that the removal of the ships had been a fatal blunder. In response to a demand for a day for a debate, Mr Balfour promised a full statement, with opportunity for discussion on the motion for adjournment before Easter.

Before the day arrived a new series of events had occurred. As a counterblast to the Russian occupation of Port Arthur, we had secured a lease of Wei-hai-wei, with the approval of the Japanese Government. It was difficult to see exactly the object of this, especially as it ran counter to our oft-declared policy of seeking no territory in China, but we imagined it was intended for Parliamentary consumption. The great debate took place at a so-called morning sitting, and the leaders of the China Party lunched together first. In order to mark our disapproval of the Government, we agreed to sit together below the gangway. I must confess, however, that we made a sorry show. None of us could catch the Speaker's eye. It was a battle of Parliamentary giants, and though we had several useful debaters amongst us, we had no giant. Mr Balfour, always best when in a tight place, excelled in his opening speech. He utterly declined to apologise for the Government ; he thought that under very difficult circumstances, occasioned by the resolute action of Russia, we had done very well. Our occupation of Wei-hai-wei, coupled with the German occupation of Kiao-Chow, would more than counterbalance the

accession of Russia's strength and prestige occasioned by her occupation of Port Arthur. He belittled altogether the episode of the removal of the ships, which he said occurred in the ordinary naval course, and had no connection with the political situation. Finally, he enumerated other diplomatic successes which we had obtained, including a pledge that the Yangtze Valley (where our principal commerce was) should not be leased to any other Power, and the concession of several new treaty ports. His speech certainly made a great impression on the Ministerial Party in the House, however sceptical many may have been as to the value of Wei-hai-wei and of the unimportance of the removal of the ships. He was followed by Sir W. Harcourt in a singularly inconclusive speech, and then Mr Courtney proceeded *more suo* to blame both sides equally, with the evident conviction that he could have managed things much better himself. Lord Charles Beresford, who had lately returned to the House as Member for York, made a rattling speech, in which he approved of the occupation of Wei-hai-wei, but declared that he would not believe in Russia's promises even if they were "twenty fathoms long," and that the open door was very nearly "a blind brick wall already, and would very soon be an ironclad one." At last Mr Yerburgh got his chance, and his rising was cheered by the China Committee, but by this time the Government had triumphed, and members were tired of the debate, and anxious to catch their trains home for the Easter recess. His speech, in consequence, was ineffective, and was received with some dissent and impatience.

The China Committee continued to dine together after Easter and to discuss Far Eastern affairs, and

various of its members occasionally intervened in Foreign Office debates, but as it was primarily formed to stiffen the Government in preventing the Russians from going to Port Arthur, when that event occurred its chief *raison d'être* had failed. I have often wondered since, whether we were wise in our efforts. The view taken by Ministers (I had an opportunity of discussing the whole matter with a leading member of the Cabinet) was that we were urging them to a policy which would have probably ended in war, not only with Russia but with France also. We were, of course, unaware how extremely critical our relations with the last-named Power had been and still were as regards West Africa, much less did we know that a meeting of the armed forces of Sir Herbert Kitchener and Major Marchand was probable on the Upper Nile in the autumn. These things the Government did know; they were, moreover, at all times greatly exercised over the affairs of South Africa, where a war with the Transvaal was always possible, unless President Kruger showed a more reasonable spirit in his dealings with the Uitlanders. Notwithstanding all this, however, I am still convinced that Russia was not ready and did not intend to fight, and that in the great game of poker which was played for the possession of Port Arthur, we held the best cards and were badly bluffed. The removal of the ships, whatever the departmental explanation may have been (and there are far too many departmental explanations in our politics), was a disaster, and if we had said "no," the sequel would have been very different. The actual result of these events was the Russo-Japanese War, in which Japan at enormous cost of life and treasure undid the effects of our diplomatic weakness, while we stood by and

kept the ring. Thus, through Japan's sacrifices, we have got back what we lost in 1898. But can anybody say for certain that the extraordinary rise of Japan is for our ultimate good?

I return to the session. We have reached the Easter recess. In the meantime, however, two memorable debates which had taken place on Home Rule showed the hopeless divisions which existed between the Liberals and the Nationalists, and among the Liberals themselves, on the question. The first was a motion of Mr Redmond's, insisting on the urgency of Home Rule for Ireland; the second a proposal made by Mr Herbert Roberts, a Welsh Radical, for Home Rule All Round, whereby Ireland would have to take her chance with Scotland, Wales, and England, and there would be a sort of scramble for who was to get it first. In the course of these amusing discussions, Sir W. Harcourt fell out with Mr Redmond, and Mr Dillon with both, and Mr Roberts' motion caused great offence to Mr D. A. Thomas, another Welsh Radical. Mr Balfour was at his very best, chaffing his embarrassed opponents unmercifully, while at the same time expressing a sort of modest hesitation in intervening in these domestic squabbles at all.

After this the chief matter of importance was the Benefices Bill. For some years the Church Committee had felt that they ought not to confine themselves to defensive measures, but that an effort should be made to obtain as much genuine Church reform as was possible under existing Parliamentary conditions. Even in the last Parliament they had brought in a Church Patronage Bill, which had previously been introduced in the House of Lords by Archbishop Benson; but the Liberal Government were unwilling

to grant any facilities for its passage. At the beginning of each session of the present Parliament, some thirty or forty members had balloted to secure a day for the measure, which in a rather extended shape was now known as the *Benefices Bill*; and in 1896 Lord Cranborne, having secured an early place, carried the second reading by a large majority, and had the Bill sent to the *Grand Committee on Law*—Mr Healy, with characteristic humour, suggesting that the *Grand Committee on Trade* would be more appropriate, as the measure dealt largely with the abominable practice of trafficking in livings. In the Committee a determined attempt was made to smother it with amendments. Three sets of opponents appeared. The political dissenters were determined that nothing should be done to strengthen the Church, as this might render disestablishment more difficult. A certain number of the older Tories were horrified at the apparent attack on property contemplated by the Bill, forgetting that an advowson could not be regarded as property in the ordinary sense, but involved a sacred trust. Their principal advocate was Mr H. S. Foster, who seemed to be the friend of the trafficking patron and the simoniacal priest. Thirdly, the extreme Low Church Party were very much afraid of increasing the power of the bishops, though how corrupt practices in the matter of sales of presentations could be stopped without giving larger powers to the executive officers of the Church, it is difficult to see. With the benevolent aid of the *Solicitor-General* (Sir R. Finlay), however, we got the Bill through Committee, only to have it talked out by Mr Foster and his friends on Report.

In 1897 we were unlucky in the ballot, and were unable to proceed with the Bill. We now determined

to go to the Government, and we pointed out that it was a very serious matter if, with a friendly administration and a majority not hostile to the Church, no measure of Church reform could be got through the House of Commons. Mr Balfour was exceedingly sympathetic, and as a result a Benefices Bill was promised in the Queen's Speech of 1898. To make doubly sure, however, we balloted again, and secured an early place in Mr Lyttelton's name: and the two Bills, Mr Lyttelton's and that of the Government, which differed only in minor details, were both read a second time in the same week, and referred to the Grand Committee, where they were amalgamated into one measure. In the debate on the second reading of the Government Bill, several Liberal Nonconformists, notably Mr Wallace and Mr Perks, dissociated themselves altogether from the tactics of Messrs Brynmor Jones and Carvel Williams in opposing it, and gave the measure their support. Before, however, the Bill returned to the House on Report, events had occurred which nearly wrecked it, and violently agitated the whole Church of England. The more extreme members of the High Church Party, not satisfied with the concessions made to them by the Lincoln judgment, which all moderate men had hoped would prove a settlement of the difficulties within the Church, had been steadily proceeding with practices which bore a distinctly Romish appearance, and, whatever their intentions may have been, they had succeeded in shocking the public conscience. The signal of revolt was given by Mr Kensit, a brawler for whose methods no justification could exist, but who, in his rough and ready way, expressed the horror felt by many excellent people at the apparent Romanisation of the National

Church. Hence arose what became known as the "Crisis in the Church." The Report stage of the unfortunate Benefices Bill, which had really nothing to do with the question, was eagerly seized upon by the Evangelical leaders in the House as an opportunity of expressing their views, and long and acrimonious debates ensued. Sir William Harcourt in particular came to the fore, beating the Protestant drum with all his might, much to the amusement of members on both sides. On two successive nights he fulminated against Pope, prelates, and priests, until the House was positively tired of the question. He was ably supported by Mr Samuel Smith, the mildest of men, but the strongest of Protestants. The attempt, however, to turn the Benefices Bill into an anti-Ritual measure failed to secure the support of Sir John Kennaway and the more moderate Evangelicals, and the measure was shortly read a third time and sent up to the House of Lords.

Sir William Harcourt next succeeded in dragging the No-Popery cry into the debate on the Education vote, contending that Ritualism lay at the root of all the religious difficulties in the schools. This debate was chiefly memorable on account of the speech of Sir John Gorst, who was still Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, in the course of which he made a violent attack on the Voluntary schools, declaring that even the religious instruction given in them was inferior to that given in the Board schools. These remarks gave great offence, and had to be explained away by the Duke of Devonshire in the House of Lords. There certainly seemed to be a great lack of discipline in the Government, when a junior member was permitted to attack the very institution which the Government had been making

such strenuous efforts to maintain. But we had all become accustomed to Sir John Gorst by this time, and his cynical allusions to the doings of his colleagues were received with merriment on both sides.

For the rest, nothing of any importance occurred during the whole session. The Irish Local Government Bill went through without serious difficulty, and became law. The Government continued their wise policy of devoting most of their surplus to strengthening the Navy. The Chinese Question became less acute, and the West African difficulty was brought to a satisfactory conclusion by Mr Chamberlain, whose vigorous rule at the Colonial Office was often contrasted with Lord Salisbury's cautious diplomacy, not always to the advantage of the latter. Mr Chamberlain was indeed becoming the idol of the Imperialists, while Lord Salisbury found an admirer in Mr Labouchere. A little excitement blazed up over the Vaccination Bill, an excellent measure, the chief object of which was to prohibit arm-to-arm vaccination, and to compel the use of glycerinated calf-lymph. There was no intention, originally, of abolishing compulsion, and when Sir Walter Foster moved an amendment to remit it in the case of the "conscientious objector," Mr Chaplin resisted the proposal. Suddenly Mr Balfour came in to the House towards the close of the evening, and threw over Mr Chaplin just as he had thrown over Sir J. Gorst on the Education Bill two years before. The result was a partial Tory revolt, which came, however, to nothing, as the party majority were as prepared to support Mr Balfour with no compulsion as Mr Chaplin with compulsion. The general feeling, however, was that a most unnecessary concession had been made to the other side without

adequate deliberation, and many of Mr Balfour's best supporters greatly resented his action, but the Bill went through, and survived a conflict between the two Houses, the Lords giving way. Thus did Mr Balfour create the conscientious objector, a very wrongly defined individual, as his objection to vaccination is a matter not of conscience at all but of judgment, due in most cases to ignorance. Notwithstanding his existence, however, it is probable that more persons are vaccinated since the Act was passed than ever were under the old law of compulsion.

The session terminated as usual about August 12, Mr Balfour being always very successful in providing us with good holidays. Nor must this be put down to indolence on his part or indifference to public needs. He held, and in my judgment rightly, that the House could not do good work if kept sitting continuously all the year round, especially at times when most people were taking their holidays. No doubt the attraction of the grouse moors to the majority of Unionist members, and the difficulty of keeping a majority after the 12th had something to do with it, but in the main I believe his contention was correct, and that, having regard to the long hours prevailing in the House, especially among those active members who were constantly serving on committees, and the amount of work that had to be done outside, it was not wise policy to keep Parliament sitting for much more than six months in the year.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE RECESS OF 1898, THE SESSION OF 1899, THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, AND THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1900

DURING the recess of 1898 occurred Lord Kitchener's final advance up the Nile, the victory of Omdurman, and the recapture of Khartoum. The Fashoda incident followed immediately afterwards, which for a moment brought England and France to the brink of war; but the tactfulness of Lord Kitchener in his dealings with Major Marchand, the firmness of Lord Salisbury, the determination and unanimity of the country, and beyond all things the knowledge of the immense power of our Navy, which had been gradually built up at such cost by successive Unionist Governments, combined to save the situation, and the French Foreign Minister, M. Delcassé, was forced to admit that Fashoda could be of no possible use to the Republic.

The position of the Ministry was greatly strengthened by these events, and was further enhanced by fresh dissensions which broke out in the Radical camp. While Lord Rosebery, Mr Asquith, and others openly supported the Government on the Fashoda question, Sir William Harcourt, Mr Morley, and the Little England section generally—who were really the majority of the party both in the

House and in the country—disapproved of the Egyptian policy *in toto*, though they were patriotic enough to keep their views to themselves during the actual crisis. A few weeks later a curious interchange of letters took place between Sir William Harcourt and Mr Morley, in which the former resigned his position as leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, and Mr Morley approved of his action, resigning, however, nothing himself, as he had nothing to resign.

Sir William Harcourt's resignation was clearly due to the long-drawn-out intrigue against him by the supporters of Lord Rosebery, which came to a head in their divergence of opinion over the Fashoda affair and the Nile policy generally.

Thus the Unionist Government had succeeded in triumphing over their enemies at home and abroad, and occupied a position of strength greater now than at any time either before or after, with the possible exception of the few weeks which immediately followed the election of 1900. Though their legislation had been weak and inconclusive, and appeared to be based on the principle of avoiding all difficult problems, and though the session of 1896 had been badly mismanaged, they had done nothing to arouse the rancorous hostility of any section of the people, and they were greatly assisted by the fact that public attention for the last three years had been directed almost entirely abroad. Lord Salisbury's ultracautious in China, which had occasioned a good deal of grumbling, especially in business circles, had been more than atoned for by his firmness over Fashoda, and the success which had attended Lord Kitchener's campaign.

In Mr Chamberlain the country saw the first real Colonial Minister it had ever possessed, and his efforts were appreciated quite as highly in the Colonies themselves. Mr Goschen's successful efforts at strengthening the Navy met with general approval, while Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was universally regarded as one of the strongest and wisest men in the Cabinet. If a General Election had taken place in the autumn of 1898, I do not doubt that we should have come back to power with a majority, but the time for an election had not yet arrived, and Ministers had no reason to anticipate events.

Before the meeting of Parliament, one or two changes occurred in the personnel of the Government. Mr Curzon, the brilliant Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, had been appointed Viceroy of India, and his place at the Foreign Office was taken by Mr Brodrick. This left the thankless office of Under-Secretary to the War Office vacant, and it was filled by Mr George Wyndham, who had long stood on the verge of office, and was now admitted into the charmed circle. These appointments met with general approval; but Mr Curzon's promotion involved the loss of his seat at Southport, the election taking place before the Government had earned their Fashoda kudos, and while Chinese affairs were still rankling, especially in Lancashire.

Immediately before the opening of Parliament, the Liberal Party held a meeting to elect a leader in the House of Commons, and their choice fell upon Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Sir Henry had been in no way distinguished up to the time of his elevation. He was regarded as one of the most official of the official Whigs, but he possessed a

certain pawky good-humour, which was appreciated on both sides. He had, moreover, succeeded in making himself popular at the War Office, a most difficult accomplishment, by the simple expedient of doing nothing and leaving the Army alone; and it was his misfortune, rather than his fault, that the fatal division on the Cordite vote occurred in 1895, and caused the downfall of the Government. When he was chosen leader he was regarded, on both sides, as a mere makeshift or stop-gap, but he proved to be the very man the Liberal Party had wanted for a long time past.

His first appearance in his new capacity in the debate on the Address was awaited with much curiosity, and he certainly succeeded in making an excellent impression. His speech was very obviously prepared; but, after all, Sir William Harcourt's speeches were generally the same. The matter and manner were both good, and the Liberal Party discovered that they had got a far better leader than they probably imagined.

The Queen's Speech was not an inspiring document, and it is curious to note, in view of what subsequently occurred, that no reference was made in it to affairs in the Transvaal. The chief measure promised was the London Government Bill, for dividing up London into a large number of separate municipalities—the “Tennification of London,” as the Radicals of the County Council called it, who, on their side, were described by Lord Salisbury as suffering from “Megalomania.” This, however, could not be regarded as a measure of general interest, and many Unionists who were not London members cared very little about it, and would have preferred an extension of the area of the City and of

the functions of the Lord Mayor; but, like all good party men, as the Government said the Bill was the proper way to deal with the question, and the London members approved of it, they gave it their support. For the rest, we were put off with Scotch private bill legislation, Irish Technical instruction, Metropolitan Water Supply, and other such questions, which promised that the session would beat even its predecessor's record for dullness.

One or two interesting debates took place, however, on the Address. An attempt to revive the Chinese Question, made by Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, led to the disruption of the Chinese Party, Mr Yerburgh refusing to support Sir Ellis, who had to content himself with the assistance of Mr Walton, the member for Barnsley, known in the House as "Chinese Walton," because, having spent a few weeks in China in the course of a tour round the world, he was able on all occasions to display greater knowledge of the Chinese Question than anybody else—at least, so it was said. Mr Brodrick replied for the Government in his new capacity as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the general impression left was that the policy of the "open door" had not been infringed to any serious extent, and that on the whole we had not done badly from the commercial standpoint, though diplomatically we were playing a very second fiddle to Russia in Pekin.

A debate on the crisis in the Church followed, much to the regret of all earnest and moderate churchmen, who were most anxious to keep the affairs of the Church out of the heated and partisan atmosphere of the House of Commons. Mr Samuel Smith, himself a Nonconformist, again led the attack, denouncing the bishops in shrill tones for

their alleged apathy, and demanding instantaneous legislation to put down Ritualism. An effective speech was delivered by Lord Cranborne in reply, in which he showed how much the bishops had done by the exercise of their powers of private suasion in the way of stopping illegal or doubtful practices. He was followed in the same strain by Mr Balfour, who strongly deprecated party legislation, while fully recognising the existence of the evil. Mr Balfour's handling of the subject on this and several other occasions was indeed admirable; and whatever criticism it may be the fashion to make on his public career at the present time, members of the Church of England owe him a deep debt of gratitude for the wide and generous sympathy which he has invariably shown to their Church, of which he is usually believed not to be a member, and for the statesman-like tolerance which has always characterised him. After further debate on every conceivable topic, the Address was agreed to.

I am not going to describe the wearisome debates over the London Government Bill, especially as I was laid up part of the time and absent from the House, and on my recovery my time was very much occupied by a lengthy Committee, which had to decide upon the amalgamation of the South-Eastern and London Chatham and Dover Railways. The Committee passed the Bill, immense advantages being promised to the public as the result of the economies in working, which it was hoped that the union would effect; but dwellers on the line have since discovered that two bards do not make one good, and the South-Eastern and Chatham Railway, as it is now called, seems to have inherited all the vices of the two systems from which it is sprung. Another measure of minor

importance in which I was interested was the Telephone Bill, introduced by the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr Hanbury. The Post Office had from the beginning made the most egregious muddle of the telephone business. At first they had poured buckets of cold water on the new invention, chiefly because some of their sapient officials feared it would seriously interfere with the telegraph revenue, so they left it to various private companies to develop, working under licenses, which companies soon combined into a monopoly called The National Telephone Company. The National Company acted as all monopolies do, and while they paid good dividends, the extension of telephony in this country was strangled, and we lagged behind most continental states, to say nothing of America. After many debates in the House, a Select Committee was appointed in 1898, of which I was a member, Mr Hanbury being Chairman. The Committee, after hearing much evidence, came to the conclusion that the only practical plan was for the State to purchase the National Company, and to establish a universal Post Office system. As we were assured, however, by Mr Hanbury that the Cabinet would not consent to this (Lord Salisbury having a rooted objection to any avoidable increase of Government employees, on account of the pressure they were in the habit of bringing on Members of Parliament), we recommended as an alternative that licenses might be granted to municipalities, who were prepared to compete with the National Company. In 1899 the proposals of the Committee were embodied in a Bill, of which Mr Hanbury was in charge, and which, though a non-party Government measure, encountered fierce opposition not only from directors of the

National Company, who abounded in the House, but also from many Conservative members, who objected to this novel form of municipal trading. Looking back on it in the light of subsequent events, I think there was much in their objections. As a member of the late Committee, however, I supported the Bill—partly also, it must be confessed, because the Corporation of Tunbridge Wells were very insistent on having a telephone of their own, and I felt it my duty to support my constituents. The result was not encouraging. The Bill became law; Tunbridge Wells got its license and set up its system, and within a year sold it to the National Telephone Company! From which it is the more clear that Burke was right when he told the people of Bristol that a member must not be a mere delegate, but owed to his constituents the use of his judgment. We should have very different legislation, if members always realised this debt and acted accordingly.

The London Government Bill passed through both Houses without much difficulty. The debates on it were long and weary. Of its practical results I know too little of the details of London government to be able to speak, but it has certainly added to the number of illuminated addresses which Foreign Potentates who traverse London on state visits to the City are able to take home to their admiring subjects.

After the Easter recess, Church questions were again to the fore. There seemed to be no escaping from the Church crisis, a certain number of ultra-Protestant churchmen being determined to bring it forward; and their efforts were eagerly supported by the political dissenters, who naturally rejoiced at anything which caused a division in the Church. It is

extraordinary that the former could not see that they were playing into the hands of the latter. First of all, Mr Sidney Gedge, securing a private members' afternoon by the ballot, proposed a resolution to the effect that the Government in the disposal of Crown patronage should give no preferment to any clergyman, unless they were satisfied that he would obey his bishop and the Courts of Law which had ecclesiastical jurisdiction. This seemingly harmless resolution was artfully devised so as to give offence to the High Church Party, since, if it was carried, no clergyman could receive preferment at the hands of the Prime Minister or Lord Chancellor, who would not openly accept the jurisdiction of the Privy Council. A curious debate followed. Mr Samuel Hoare, a highly respected Low churchman, moved an amendment, which had evidently been drafted with the assent of the Government, to substitute for the latter part of the resolution, "obedience to the bishops and Book of Common Prayer," and this was supported by Mr Balfour. After further debate, which seemed to show that everybody was satisfied, Mr Gedge allowed his original resolution to be negatived; but when the amended resolution was put, Mr Bartley moved to add at the end, "and the law as declared by the Courts which have jurisdiction in matters ecclesiastical," thus practically reviving the original proposal of Mr Gedge. In this form the resolution was carried by 200 votes to 14, only Lord Hugh Cecil and the more pronounced High churchmen voting against it. A few weeks later the same questions were discussed again on the Church Discipline Bill, a very drastic measure, which, if carried, might have deprived every clergyman in England of his benefice for various breaches of the

Rubrics. It was introduced by Mr Charles McArthur, one of the Liverpool members, and opposed by the Attorney-General (Sir R. Webster), who moved a declaratory amendment to the effect that, "if the efforts now being made by archbishops and bishops to secure the due obedience of the clergy are not speedily effectual, further legislation will be required to maintain the observance of the existing laws of Church and Realm." In the debate which followed, a really brilliant speech was made by Lord Hugh Cecil, in which he condemned both the Bill and Sir R. Webster's amendment. The Bill was lost, but the amendment stands in the Journals of the House, and has been appealed to more than once by the Evangelical Party.

After the rejection of the Church Discipline Bill, we heard no more of the Church crisis during the session, a really great relief, especially to earnest churchmen, who felt that the position of the Church was greatly weakened by these constant discussions in a Parliament consisting largely of non-churchmen, while the delicate task, which was being undertaken by the bishops, of restoring order without at the same time causing a disruption or damping down genuine zeal among any section of the clergy, was made all the more difficult. The searchlight of public opinion was to be thrown on the Church in another way.

When the Government brought in their Agricultural Rates Bill in 1896, they omitted from its benefits the owners and occupiers of tithe rent charge, although in theory one-tenth of the produce of the land belonged to them, and they were as much entitled to relief as the owners and occupiers of the remaining nine-tenths. This was particularly hard

on the clergy, who, in so far as they depended upon tithe rent charge, were rated upon what were in fact their professional incomes, and were the only class so treated. To make matters worse, they were rated upon the whole amount, the deductions which were allowed in the case of ordinary land (*e.g.*, for repairs, etc.) being inapplicable to tithe rent charge, while deductions for out-goings, which to them were necessary, *e.g.*, for the payments of curates or for district churches, were not permitted—so that as a matter of fact a parson was frequently called upon to pay rates on money which never went into his pocket at all. Attempts had been made by several private members to include tithe rent charge in the Act of 1896, but the Government had refused to do so. The result was a great agitation among the clergy, who collected and gave much evidence before the Royal Commission which was sitting on Local Taxation, and so impressed were the Commissioners with the oppressive character of the existing law, that they issued an interim report recommending that relief should be given at the earliest possible moment. The Government acted upon this report, and late in the session brought in a Bill by which clerical owners of tithe rent charge would in future pay only one-half of the rates for which they were liable, the deficit being made up out of the local taxation account. The Bill was in the charge of Mr Walter Long; but even in its initial stages it was met with violent opposition from the Liberal side, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman himself moving the adjournment of the debate on the first reading. The Government, however, persisted and carried the measure after long and angry debates, in the course of which Mr George Whiteley, who had opposed the Agricultural Rates Act three

years ago, publicly withdrew from the Unionist Party and crossed the floor of the House. The Bill was undoubtedly right in principle, and aimed at removing a great injustice, but its method was crude (why, for example, should all the tithe-owning clergy have been treated alike whether they had necessary out-goings or not?), and as it benefited one class only, it was exceedingly unpopular in the country generally. It provided the Opposition with a really good cry *pro tem.*, which they were not slow to use; and at Stockport, which was Mr Whiteley's constituency, the Conservatives felt so weak that they asked him not to resign his seat (which he had most honourably offered to do), but to remain on with full independence of action. The Government were indeed losing ground for other reasons as well. Their inaction, in face of the Church crisis, wise and statesmanlike as it was, had alienated the Protestant Party, who were moreover already very suspicious of Mr Balfour's obvious leanings to the establishment of a Roman Catholic University in Ireland, while Mr Ritchie, the President of the Board of Trade, always an unfortunate Minister for his party, though his mistakes in one office invariably led to his promotion to another, had made an egregious error by bringing in, without sufficient consideration, a Bill for compelling railway companies to fit their trains with automatic couplings, and then immediately dropping it in consequence of the pressure of railway directors and others. In the meantime, however, events were occurring destined to direct public attention entirely from these domestic affairs, and to affect profoundly not only the position of parties, but the whole British Empire.

The relations between this country and the South African Republic, better known as the Transvaal,

had never been satisfactory since we had returned to the latter its autonomy in 1881. However generous may have been the motives which underlay Mr Gladstone's policy after the battle of Majuba Hill, his action proved to be most unwise, as the Boers ascribed it to fear and fear alone. From that time on they clearly thought that there was no concession which they could not induce the British Government to make by the exercise of sufficient pressure, and they openly and flagrantly defied us upon every occasion. Little harm, however, would have been done if the Transvaal had remained an agricultural community like the Orange Free State. The discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand, however, brought countless European immigrants, chiefly British, and the Boers, who had crossed the Vaal in order to find a promised land of their own where they would be free from the world outside, but who had unfortunately lighted on the greatest gold-producing area in the world, found themselves pursued by enterprising and intelligent bands of men of all classes, bent on money-making, who threatened to outnumber them altogether, just as a similar fate had overtaken the Mormons through the discovery of silver in their promised land of Utah. The policy adopted by the Boers, headed by President Kruger, who was simply a clever and determined peasant, was illiberal and mean in the extreme. He did not want the "Uitlanders," as they were termed, but he was only too glad to tax the products of their industry, and he kept them in complete subjection by refusing them any share in the government, which, moreover, had become hopelessly corrupt. The result was the agitation on the Rand, which culminated in the events connected

with the Jameson Raid, when an armed insurrection of Uitlanders in Johannesburg fizzled out apparently because Mr Rhodes, always loyal to the Empire, insisted that whatever was attempted must be done under the Imperial flag, whereas some of the leaders, distrusting the Home Government ever since Majuba Hill, were prepared to set up an independent Republic free from the restraint of Krugerism. The Raid itself was an unmixed evil, as it put Great Britain in the wrong. The Boers had now a legitimate grievance against us, which they paraded before the world, sending us a ridiculous bill, which included the absurd item of one million pounds for "moral and intellectual damage."

Though Mr Chamberlain and the Imperial Government repudiated the raiders altogether, and brought Dr Jameson and his friends to justice, they did not cease to urge on President Kruger the necessity for reform; and shortly after the Raid, the Colonial Secretary sent his well-known despatch, in which he urged Home Rule for the Rand, much to the amusement of Sir William Harcourt and the Opposition in the House of Commons. Mr Kruger, however, was obdurate. He, no doubt, felt sure that the Home Government would talk but would never act. He relied too largely on German support, and was carrying on an infamous pro-Boer press campaign through his agent, Dr Leyds, on the Continent; and the German Emperor's famous telegram, after the suppression of the Raid, lent colour to the view that Germany would support him. Meanwhile he was heavily arming in view of possible hostilities. It is clear that his ambition was to accomplish complete Dutch ascendancy throughout South Africa, and he was already contending that by

the Convention of 1884 the supremacy of Britain as Paramount Power had been terminated. In this arbitrary policy he was backed up by President Steyn of the Orange Free State, who hoped to be Mr Kruger's successor as master of South Africa, and who would probably have accomplished it had not these designs been detected and frustrated in time. Their frustration was only effected, however, by the South African War.

Mr Chamberlain was undoubtedly well informed of the ambitions of Presidents Kruger and Steyn, but during the High Commissionership of Lord Rosmead it cannot be said that he was altogether well served, nor, amid the many pressing complications which had been caused by the affairs of Venezuela, Armenia, Crete, China, West Africa, and Fashoda, could the Government devote much time or attention to South African matters. In 1898, however, Sir Alfred Milner, probably the most brilliant man whom the country had produced for many years, was selected by Mr Chamberlain as Lord Rosmead's successor. Sir Alfred Milner was a Liberal; he had been a Liberal candidate for Parliament, and if antecedents went for anything, it might have been thought that he would sympathise with the Majuba policy and Boer independence, and that he would certainly have approved of the South African Republic, if there was anything Liberal about it. His departure from England was signalised by a great farewell banquet, over which Mr Asquith presided; but however Liberal his ideas may have been, he very soon discovered after his arrival at the Cape that the Transvaal Government under Mr Kruger was nothing else than an intolerant and corrupt oligarchy, and he saw in Messrs Kruger and

Steyn's designs a direct menace to the Empire. Moreover, by 1899, the difficulties which had been confronting the country for several years in every part of the world had been successfully overcome, thanks to Lord Salisbury's admirable diplomacy and Mr Chamberlain's firm rule at the Colonial Office, and the Government were able to devote their undivided attention to South Africa without much fear of foreign complications.

We had nearly been to war with the Transvaal on several previous occasions, notably in 1895 over the question of the closing of the Drifts, when, however, Mr Kruger, confronted with the vigorous opposition of Mr Rhodes, had thought it best to give way. In spite, however, of the generally unsatisfactory character of our relations, nothing very serious appears to have been anticipated at the beginning of 1899, as shown by the fact already mentioned, that no allusion was made to the Transvaal in the Queen's Speech, and I do not remember any important reference to South African affairs in the early part of the session. A crisis was precipitated at Johannesburg, however, by the murder of a working man, named Edgar, by the Transvaal police, and their subsequent acquittal in a Transvaal court of law. This resulted in the sending to England of a petition to the Queen, signed by 20,000 British subjects in the Transvaal, asking for protection and redress of grievances. In the meantime Sir Alfred Milner had come to the conclusion that the state of affairs was intolerable, and he sent home a despatch, the publication of which caused a great sensation, in which he described the Uitlanders as being treated like "helots" by President Kruger, and stated that in his deliberate judgment a clear case for intervention existed. An attempt to come to

terms was made in the spring at the Bloemfontein Conference, when Sir A. Milner and President Kruger met, and the former strongly urged the latter to grant the franchise to the Uitlanders in reasonable terms as to length of residence and other qualifications ; but the old President refused to give way, and the conference broke up without any very definite results. After this we gradually drifted into war. It is probable that President Kruger thought we should never really fight, but that he could wear down our persistency ; and his demands and pretensions grew as the negotiations proceeded. He claimed that by the Convention of 1884 we had entirely renounced our position as Paramount Power, and insisted that we should submit all outstanding questions to arbitration, which would have been an admission that the Transvaal was a Sovereign Power, to which we could not possibly agree. In the event (unlikely as he thought) of war taking place, he relied on the immense armaments which he had been building up in recent years, of the existence of which we were very imperfectly aware. No doubt, too, he counted on German intervention. We, on our side, never expected war, being confident that he would give way. "Is there going to be war?" was the question daily asked in the lobbies of the House of Commons, and the invariable answer of those supposed to be in the know was : "Of course not, unless indeed Kruger proves more foolish than we expect ; but we don't think he will." The Opposition were mainly concerned in embarrassing the Government, who, they endeavoured to prove, were eagerly fomenting war. By so doing they added greatly to the difficulty of the situation, and played straight into Mr Kruger's hands. The chief offender was Sir

Henry Campbell-Bannerman himself, whose conduct—in contradistinction to that of several of his colleagues on the front bench—was thoroughly unpatriotic, and in any other country but our own would have prevented his ever again holding responsible office. He showed his prescience by going down to Ilford in June, and saying at a public meeting there that he saw no occasion whatever for military preparations, and so pleased was he with this statement that he repeated it a few nights later at the City Liberal Club. Nobody afterwards more violently abused the Government for having begun the war with insufficient preparations. Towards the end of the session a debate occurred in the House, in the course of which Mr Chamberlain appeared to be distinctly hopeful of a peaceful settlement, and when we separated for the recess we went away under the impression that the worst of the crisis was over.

What followed need not be repeated here. The Government thought it necessary, notwithstanding Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, to increase the South African Garrison, whereupon President Kruger, convinced at last that we meant business, issued his insolent ultimatum. This settled matters: forty-eight hours later hostilities had begun.

Parliament was immediately called together to vote supplies of money and men. The first serious action happened to synchronise with our meeting. and as Mr Wyndham, the Under-Secretary for War, was making his statement as to the troops proposed to be sent out, a telegram was handed to him announcing the battle of Dundee. By leave of the House he read it at once. When he reached the statement that the "Dublin Fusiliers" had gallantly charged up the hill and taken it at the point of the

bayonet, all eyes were turned on Mr Dillon and the Irish Nationalists, who had distinguished themselves by publicly siding with the Boers, and by trying to stop recruiting in Ireland. Mr Dillon sat still in melancholy silence. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach asked leave to raise ten millions (eight to be borrowed) for the expenses of the war, which he thought would amply cover the cost. In reply to criticisms on the largeness of the sum and the number of troops which we proposed to send, he pointed out that on previous occasions the War Office had often under-estimated the cost of expeditions, but this time we were determined to be on the safe side. How curious this seems in the face of what occurred! A little later, when the retreat from Dundee was taking place, and a statement prepared by Lord Wolseley was read to the House of the number of Boers believed to be converging on Ladysmith, the general comment was that the Commander-in-Chief had altogether over-estimated the number of Boers under arms, and computations in the *Times* tended to show that they could not possibly put more than about 30,000 men into the field. So utterly misinformed was the nation, and especially those who had the best means of knowing, as to the forces arrayed against us. In the House of Commons, almost the only man who had any misgivings was Sir Edward Clarke, who was subsequently denounced as a pro-Boer for his prescience. The sittings of the House were brief, and fortunately terminated before the black week of Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso.

It is no part of my purpose to describe the war, of which I was not a witness. Nor can I write any account of proceedings in the House of Commons

during the year 1900. I was serving with embodied Militia at Malta, to which fortress my battalion had been sent after having volunteered for South Africa. We were the first Militia to leave the United Kingdom since the Crimean War; and it was a great disappointment to us to be kept at Malta, while other battalions embodied long afterwards went straight to the seat of war. Such are the ways of the War Office; but I have no doubt that we were quite as useful at Malta, where we set free a regular battalion, as we should have been had we gone to South Africa itself, to be placed on lines of communication, or to watch over Boer prisoners at Simon's Town.

As the year 1900 wore on, and the Boer resistance was gradually broken, it became clear that the Government meant to go to the country, and to take a verdict on the policy of the war before meeting Parliament in 1901. At the end of August the annexation of the Transvaal was proclaimed, and I felt perfectly certain that this portended a General Election. A few days later an Army Order was issued giving extended leave to all officers in the auxiliary forces who wished to become candidates for the House of Commons. I hurried home and easily secured re-election, as did most members of my party.

Thus occurred the "Khaki" General Election, so fiercely denounced as an unscrupulous party trick. It was a trick, or rather an accident, in the sense that it gave the Unionist Party a very much larger majority than we should have secured had there been no war—our majority indeed was almost exactly the same as in 1895, the reduction caused by by-elections in the interval being made good; but I do not think that it can be justly described as

unscrupulous or underhand. According to all the known rules of the game, the war was over with the occupation of the two Boer capitals, and nobody could foresee the extraordinary prolongation of the resistance. It was natural, therefore, that the Government should choose this moment to submit the policy of the war and the future settlement of the country to the electorate. It is perfectly true, however, that practically the only question discussed was the war ; and there is much in the contention that the House of Commons elected on this one issue had no moral right to deal with other questions over which there was acute party difference or controversy. Here, indeed, there seems to be a flaw in our Constitution. A Parliament is elected for seven years, and can hardly be expected to confine itself for the whole of that period to the discussion of one question. But we are anticipating events. The downfall of the Unionist Party will be traced later. For the moment we are concerned only with its renewed triumph at the polls in October 1900.



## PART II

1900 TO 1906

THE DOWNFALL OF THE UNIONIST  
PARTY



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FIRST RECONSTRUCTION OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE AUTUMN SESSION OF 1900, AND THE DEATH OF QUEEN VICTORIA

DIRECTLY the elections were over Lord Salisbury proceeded to reconstruct his Government. It was generally thought, and not without truth, that the Cabinet had grown rather old, and that it could be strengthened by the admission of some of the younger men who had shown ability in the last Parliament. In order, however, that this might be accomplished, it was necessary that some of the older members should retire, which, with two exceptions, viz., Lord Cross and Mr Goschen, none of them seemed inclined to do. The nation could have dispensed with the services of several of the others more easily than with those of these two Ministers, both of whom, and notably Lord Goschen, had rendered great service to the Unionist Party and to the country as a whole. Lord Salisbury accordingly intimated to two others of his colleagues, viz., Sir M. White-Ridley and Mr Chaplin, that it would be convenient if they also retired, which they obligingly did. Why this selection was made I do not know. The party would have chosen otherwise. Sir M. White-Ridley was a man of great administrative ability, who had made a model Home Secretary;

while Mr Chaplin, though his hyper-rhetorical manner sometimes caused the House to smile, was the Tory squire *par excellence*, and one of the very few left : he was the undisputed leader of the farmers and of the Country Party (from which the Tory party originally sprung), and his name carried immense weight in every agricultural constituency. His omission was a blunder ; but though he expressed publicly his sense of the injustice which had been done to him, he refused the peerage which was offered, and continued to represent his old county (Lincolnshire) in the House of Commons, to the great advantage of his constituents and of the agricultural community as a whole.

The filling up of the vacancies thus formed, which was accompanied by a considerable shuffle of offices, proceeded on principles no more intelligible than those employed to create them. Failure in a previous office, or reputed failure, seemed to be one of the best qualifications for promotion ; another was ignorance or reputed ignorance of the affairs of the office. Mr Gerald Balfour, who had not been regarded as a colossal success at the Irish Office, and who was not supposed to have much practical acquaintance with business, became President of the Board of Trade, and head of the Commercial Department of the British Empire. To Mr Hanbury, a very able man, who had made a great reputation as Secretary of the Treasury, but who did not profess to know much about farming, was allotted the post of President of the Board of Agriculture, whereby he was practically shelved, although he made his Department far more important and useful than it had previously been. Mr Ritchie, who had signalled his tenure at the Board of Trade by getting the Government into dire

trouble over the question of automatic couplings, was promoted to the Home Office, thus taking the place of Sir M. White-Ridley, a very poor exchange. The two great Departments of Defence, the War Office and the Admiralty, were allotted to Mr Brodrick and Lord Selborne respectively, who thus obtained Cabinet rank for the first time. Mr Brodrick had certainly had plenty of experience of the War Office, having served both as Under-Secretary and Financial Secretary; but in view of the necessity for drastic reform there, which had been freely promised at the elections, this was the one office where a new man untrammelled with War Office tradition was required. Of Lord Selborne it is sufficient to say that he had been a most able and painstaking Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and thoroughly deserved promotion; but his only particular qualification for the Admiralty was that he was Colonel of his County Militia, and had made a special study of the auxiliary forces on land. Lord Londonderry, who had strongly opposed the Unionist Land Act of 1896, re-entered the Cabinet as Postmaster-General; while a far more important change was made by the relinquishment of the Foreign Office by Lord Salisbury, who was succeeded by Lord Lansdowne, an appointment much criticised at the time on account of the latter's supposed failure at the War Office,<sup>1</sup> but completely justified by events. Lord Salisbury,

<sup>1</sup> The charge of having been a failure at the War Office was very unfair to Lord Lansdowne. No doubt there were serious breakdowns at the War Office during the South African War, but it must be remembered that we were called upon to send out an army very much larger than anything which had been previously contemplated by any War Minister; and but for the increases made by Lord Lansdowne between 1896 and 1899, and various small but useful reforms, the breakdown would have been far worse than it was.

himself, as Prime Minister, took the sinecure office of Lord Privy Seal, Mr Balfour remaining First Lord of the Treasury and leader of the House of Commons. The arrangement was an unusual one, and was objected to by some rigid economists, who were shocked at the revival of the Lord Privy Seal's salary of £2000 a year; Mr Gibson Bowles, however, took the opposite view (he had a marvellous facility for "opposite views"), and was pained at the idea of Lord Salisbury's services being acquired so cheaply. The public generally regretted his retirement from the Foreign Office, but fully appreciated his desire to lighten the burden after so many years of strenuous work. Mr Chamberlain and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach retained their positions, as did many of the regular official Unionists, Lord Halsbury, Lord Ashbourne, Lord G. Hamilton, Mr Akers Douglas, and Lord James of Hereford.

So far, no actually fresh blood had been introduced into the Government, though certain occupants of offices outside the Cabinet had been admitted within its fold. In dealing with the minor offices Lord Salisbury found it necessary here also to make some vacancies. Messrs T. W. Russell, Macartney, and Powell-Williams were left out of the new list. In the case of Mr Russell, his open advocacy of a scheme of compulsory land purchase in Ireland, of which the Cabinet disapproved, was a sufficient reason, though I cannot help thinking that it would have been wiser to have retained him in office, thus curtailing his independence and making use of his talents. Why Messrs Macartney and Powell-Williams were treated in this way remains a mystery; both had proved themselves to be capable under-secretaries, both were popular in the party, and were independent of

the ruling clique. However, they ceased to be under-secretaries, and were sworn of the Privy Council. In the new appointments the tendency to confine office to a particular aristocratic connection, which was noticeable when the Government was originally formed in 1895, was even more marked now, and the addition of Lord Cranborne, who became Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and who as a matter of fact had fairly earned promotion, to the already large number of relations of the Prime Minister in the Government, caused it to be nicknamed the "Hotel Cecil Unlimited." It would be nearer the truth, however, to describe it as a Government of great Unionist families, the Cecils, Cavendishes, Stanleys, Londonderrys; a sort of twentieth century reproduction of the old Whig system in the eighteenth century. I do not think our rulers sufficiently realised that a plan which was all very well in the days of high franchises and pocket boroughs was not exactly suited to these democratic times. The Conservative rank and file, the country gentlemen, and still more the keen business men who were the Tory leaders in great urban constituencies, were too conspicuously ignored. There were, however, some very good appointments. Much was hoped from Mr Wyndham, who became Chief Secretary for Ireland, after having earned a great reputation as Under-Secretary for War, both for his administrative capacity and power of debate. Again, Mr Austen Chamberlain's promotion from the Civil Lordship of the Admiralty to the Financial Secretaryship of the Treasury was well merited. That able opponent of the death duties, Captain Pretyman, who had so consistently attacked Sir Michael Hicks-Beach for not having repealed them,

earned his reward by becoming Mr A. Chamberlain's successor as Civil Lord. Another more important change at the Admiralty was caused by the appointment of Mr Arnold-Forster to the position of Under-Secretary. Mr Arnold-Forster had long been a voluminous critic in the House, and on paper, of the Navy and also of the Army, and his theoretical knowledge of all that concerned national defence was undoubtedly immense. Lastly, Mr Grant Lawson with universal approval stepped into Mr T. W. Russell's shoes as Secretary of the Local Government Board. In his place I had the honour of being appointed to the exalted office of Parliamentary Charity Commissioner, a curious position which carries with it no salary, and the holder of which ceases to be a private member without becoming a member of the Government.

The Prime Minister's aim in reconstructing the Ministry was believed to be to strengthen it, and there can be no doubt that the public generally were anxious to see this accomplished. Though they had just given to the Unionist Party a striking renewal of confidence, it cannot be said that there was any enthusiasm for the Government as such, though certain members of it, and especially Mr Chamberlain, had obtained a great hold on the people. But the general conduct of affairs both at home and abroad since 1895 had not been such as to inspire any great enthusiasm. People had not forgotten the miserable fiasco of the Education Bill of 1896, nor the ineffective and temporary character of most recent legislation; while the withdrawal of the fleet from Port Arthur, and its results, were very recent wounds to the national pride. No Government can live for ever by evading difficulties, and but for the war and

the hopeless divisions which it had caused in the Opposition, Lord Salisbury's Government would probably have lost considerably at the polls, and might have been defeated. As it was, the war had to be finished and South Africa had to be settled, and the Unionists appeared to be the only party capable of undertaking either task. The reconstruction, however, caused great disappointment. The general verdict was that the Ministry had been weakened rather than strengthened. Lord Salisbury's retirement from the Foreign Office was felt to be a disaster, though everybody appreciated the reason which prompted it. Mr Goschen and Mr Chaplin were difficult to replace. It was thought that too many of the "old stagers" had clung to office, and the new men belonged more than ever to one set.

The reconstructed Ministry started, however, with high hopes. For the moment they looked as if they might last for ever. Complete paralysis had fallen on the Liberals; they were rent clean asunder by the war. The Liberal Imperialists—or Limps as they came to be known, owing to their constant habit of talking Imperialism in the country, and voting with their party in the House of Commons—professed to believe that the war was just and inevitable, and to have complete confidence in the fair dealing and ability of Sir Alfred Milner. They were led by Lord Rosebery, Mr Asquith, Sir E. Grey, Sir H. Fowler, and Mr Haldane; but they were a minority in their own party in the House of Commons, and an even smaller minority in the country. On the other hand, the Little-Englanders and pro-Boers, led by Messrs Labouchere, Lloyd-George, E. Robertson, and others, never ceased to declaim against the war,

which they held had been wickedly forced on the Boers by Mr Chamberlain and Sir Alfred Milner, their fury with the latter, whom they regarded as a renegade Liberal, knowing no bounds. Several of them had been in correspondence with the Boer leaders when the war broke out, and all of them by their violent utterances, abusive of British soldiers and statesmen, contributed largely to the prolongation of hostilities. Their attitude was without a parallel since the days when Fox openly championed Napoleon against his own country, and many people thought that they would be punished by exclusion from office for as long a period as the Whigs were after the conclusion of the Great War. Besides these, there was a less rancorous and more patriotic body of Liberals, who were opposed to the war without actually abusing their fellow-countrymen, prominent among whom were Sir William Harcourt and Mr John Morley; while last of all, in a tabernacle by himself with few faithful henchmen, was the leader of the party, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, at heart a complete Little-Englander and pro-Boer, though he had not yet joined in the campaign of abuse, contenting himself for the time being with skilfully shutting his eyes to the divisions in the party, and declaring repeatedly that no such divisions existed.

After the elections we expected a period of grace, and no Parliamentary labours till February at least, but the continuation of the war and the need of more money compelled a meeting of the House in December. In the meantime I had had an interesting little experience of the ways of the War Office and the necessity for reform. I had come home from Malta in order to stand for Parliament, and my leave expired about the middle of November.

I had missed one session of Parliament, and now that the war appeared to be over and there was no chance of my regiment going on to South Africa, I decided to ask to be "seconded" for Parliamentary duty at home. I sent in my application in the usual form five weeks before the expiration of my leave. I waited and waited and waited, and heard nothing more, and meantime my leave was nearly over. I then went again to the War Office, and found that my application had only got to the next department above the one to which I had originally sent it, and it had to pass through the hands of endless generals and colonels, A.A.G.'s and D.A.A.G.'s, to say nothing of civilian clerks, before it could reach the Secretary of State. In the meantime I should have to return to Malta. I accordingly decided to approach the War Secretary direct, a thoroughly Parliamentary but equally unmilitary proceeding, with the result that the red tape was cut immediately, and the simple little matter settled in five minutes. This is the fashion in which I believe most business at the War Office was conducted in those days, and much is still.

We met on December 3 for a very short session, which was introduced by an equally short Queen's Speech. The only business was to make further provision for the war in South Africa. The Address was moved by Mr J. E. Gordon and seconded by Mr Fitzalan Hope, the former of whom had held a difficult seat in Scotland, while the latter had won a difficult seat at Sheffield. Having very little to talk about, they acquitted themselves exceedingly well. The session only lasted thirteen days, and was remarkable for a very dispiriting speech made by Mr Brodrick in asking for a supplementary War

Office vote for £16,000,000 for the war in South Africa and the operations in China. We all felt that our hopes that the war was over, to which we had given such glib utterance at the elections, were far from fulfilment, and that its renewal and the second invasion of the Cape Colony by the Boers were very serious matters. Some of the Opposition violently denounced the Government and all its ways, not omitting Sir A. Milner; but the vote was agreed to without a division. A considerable amount of talk also took place on the Address on the tactics of the "Khaki" election, and on the publication of certain letters found at Bloemfontein which proved that Sir Henry de Villiers, the Dutch Chief Justice of the Cape, who had assisted in drawing up the Convention of 1881, had strongly condemned President Kruger's policy before the war and had urged him to abandon it; and also that two Radical members, Dr Clark and Mr Labouchere, had been in friendly correspondence with President Kruger and the Boer leaders during the last phase of the negotiations, while Mr John Ellis had been anxious to obtain a "stream of facts" damaging to his fellow-countrymen in South Africa which he could publish at home. Mr Chamberlain in a powerful speech fully justified their publication. Besides this, the only matter of interest was an amendment moved by Mr Lloyd-George, to the effect that Ministers of the Crown and holders of subordinate Government offices in either House ought to have no interest in any company competing for Government contracts. The general principle appears to me to be sound, and I cannot help thinking that in matters of this nature, and especially in the case of Ministers holding directorships, the late

Government were far too easy-going—not that any actual public damage ensued, but a self-denying ordinance such as was constantly proposed by the Opposition would have created a feeling of confidence, and prevented the enemy having cause to blaspheme as happened now. Mr Lloyd-George utilised his motion simply for the purpose of making an exceedingly contemptible attack on Mr Chamberlain, chiefly because his brother was chairman of a company which was said to have been favoured by the War Office! Mr Chamberlain found no difficulty in replying to Mr Lloyd-George's charges.

On December 16 the House was prorogued, and we expected not to meet again till February at earliest; but in the meantime an event occurred which plunged the whole Empire into mourning, and called for the immediate reassembly of Parliament. About the middle of January it was suddenly announced that the Queen was ill. Three days later she was reported to be sinking; the next day—January 22—she died.

It is difficult to portray the feelings which this event gave rise to. The very great majority of Englishmen had never lived under any other sovereign than Queen Victoria, who, moreover, rarely seemed to suffer from those ailments which oppress humanity, and she had come to be regarded as a sort of permanent institution. All of a sudden, we were conscious that she was gone, and the whole Empire was filled with a sense of irreparable bereavement. Parliament had to be summoned at once—and in the early morning of the 23rd, I received the following telegram, which was sent to all members of the House:—

“The House of Commons will meet to-day,

Wednesday, at 4 P.M. ; the Speaker will be present, and members will proceed to take the oath of allegiance ; the business will be only formal. Arthur James Balfour."

Accordingly the great majority of us who happened to be in England hastened to London the same day, and took the oath of allegiance to King Edward VII., whose accession had been proclaimed that morning. On Friday, the 25th, Mr Balfour moved an address to the King in a singularly happy speech, in which after dwelling on the great loss sustained by the nation through the death of Queen Victoria, he referred to the undoubted, though little-noticed fact, that during her reign, and especially in more recent years, the influence of the Crown had been a growing factor, and was likely still further to increase with the development of the colonies, " those free self-governing commonwealths beyond the sea bound to us by the person of the sovereign." Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who always shines in speech on set occasions, worthily seconded the motion, which was, of course, carried unanimously.

On February 2, most members of the House of Commons met again in London before the opening of the session, on the occasion of the Funeral of the late Queen. Her remains were carried on a gun-carriage from Victoria Station to Paddington—and we witnessed the solemn procession from a stand in the Mall. Every branch of the sea and land forces was represented. Following the coffin and the Royal Standard, borne by a Non-Commissioned Officer of the Guards, rode the King with the German Emperor and the Duke of Connaught. The German Emperor's conduct on this occasion and throughout the whole of this sad period made a great

impression on the British public, and did much to remove the feeling of hostility which had existed since the Kruger telegram.

Thus since the prorogation in August we had had a General Election, a demise of the Crown, a reconstruction of the Ministry, and two extremely short sessions of the House. We had also begun a new century. On February 14 we were to meet for what would be officially known as 1 Ed. VII.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SESSION OF 1901

THE first session of the new reign and century and of the reconstructed Salisbury Ministry was destined to be the most barren, from the legislative standpoint, in my recollection, which Ministers clearly anticipated, for they put practically nothing into the King's Speech. Nobody could get wildly excited over reform of the Final Court of Appeal, or over the law relating to Lunatics, or even the Voluntary Sale of Land in Ireland, while all parties were agreed that some Military changes were necessary, and were equally uncertain as to what form they should take. The fact is that the Government had been returned with no mandate except to settle South Africa after the war, and as the war was still raging, their sole immediate duty was to bring it to a termination. It was inevitable, therefore, that questions connected with the war should overshadow everything else.

Parliament was opened by the King in person on February 14, and thus a yearly pageant was revived which had been almost forgotten. When the faithful Commons were summoned to the Bar of the House of Lords to hear the Speech, one of the most unseemly rushes I have ever witnessed took place; staid and venerated members jostling each other in their desire to get a chance of seeing and hearing their Sovereign.

Personally, I was fortunate, which I attribute to my experience of football at Rugby. We returned in less haste to the Lower House, to await the moving of the Address.

This duty was undertaken on the present occasion by Mr H. W. Forster, member for the adjoining division to mine in Kent, who had been first returned to the House when I was, in 1892. Mr Forster had hitherto been an infrequent speaker, and a not much more frequent attender, in the House, but he showed on this occasion that he could speak very well when he cared to. Sir A. Agnew, a new Scotch Unionist, seconded the Address.

We now settled down to the usual fortnight's waste of time, during which every conceivable topic in, or more usually not in, the King's Speech was discussed. Of course the conduct of the war predominated, and Mr Bryce took the opportunity on the first day of the debate to protest against the annexation of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, thus differing with most of his colleagues on the Front Opposition Bench. At a later stage Mr Lloyd-George vehemently denounced the conduct of the British generals in the field, and moved an amendment which gave Mr Winston Churchill the opportunity of making his maiden speech. It was obviously very carefully prepared, and was marred to some extent by a slight impediment in his speech; but his name and the memory of his father caused a large audience to assemble, and he certainly scored a Parliamentary success. Needless to say, he strongly defended the Government and the conduct of the war. Later on, amusement was caused by an Irish Nationalist addressing the House in the Irish tongue. The Speaker, confronted with a sudden difficulty,

found a most ingenious mode of escape, ruling that the member in question (Mr O'Donnell) was out of order in speaking in Irish, because he could not tell whether his remarks were in order or not! The debate on the Address soon after came to a conclusion; but in the meantime we had discussed social reform, pure beer (the agitation in favour of which had received an unexpected impetus by an epidemic of arsenical poisoning at Manchester, said to have been caused by the use of bad glucose in the brewing of beer), Irish land purchase, and the United Irish League—a new body formed by Mr William O'Brien on the lines of the old Land League and National League, which was strongly represented in the new House—the defence of Gibraltar, on which Mr Gibson Bowles had much to say, and China, which gave Mr Joseph Walton a further opportunity of narrating his experiences. The debate having been prolonged till the end of February, the Government were obliged to turn their attention immediately to the finance for the year.

Now occurred one of those scenes which one would gladly bury in oblivion, and which struck a sudden and serious blow at the dignity of the House. On March 5, the Government asked for a Vote on Account, a modest little sum of £17,000,000, and the day was set apart for the discussion of it. On a Vote on Account, as is well known, any conceivable topic may be raised, but if a reduction be moved to call attention to a particular subject, the speeches must be confined to that subject until the amendment is disposed of. On the present occasion Mr Yoxall, the Liberal representative of the National Union of Teachers, and one of the best-dressed men in the House (elementary school teachers are always

well dressed), moved a reduction in the vote for the Board of Education, in order to air many grievances that he had against that department, and an instructive debate, enlivened by the whimsicalities of Sir John Gorst, ensued. The House had in recent years showed far greater eagerness for educational progress than formerly, and on the present occasion a certain thing called the Cockerton judgment, of which much more hereafter, caused still greater interest to be taken, with the result that Mr Yoxall's motion occupied the whole night, and no other subject could be raised at all. This was too much for the Irish Nationalists, who had returned in fighting form to the new Parliament, and among whom were many new members belonging to the United Irish League, already mentioned, determined to assert themselves and their love for their down-trodden country ; and when Mr Balfour, just before 12 o'clock, moved the closure on the whole vote (it had been understood that the debate on the Vote on Account was to last one night only), they howled with indignation, and amid great uproar refused to leave their seats when the House was ordered to be cleared for the division. Mr Lowther, the Chairman, being unable to enforce his will, sent for the Speaker, who, however, was equally unsuccessful. After various attempts at persuasion he proceeded to "name" twelve members for refusing to obey the Chair, whereupon Mr Balfour, following the usual course, moved that they be suspended from the service of the House ; but this, however, did not solve the difficulty, for being called upon to withdraw by the Speaker, they refused to go. "The Sergeant-at-Arms will do his duty," said the Speaker, and the Sergeant proceeded to tap each member on the

shoulder, a ceremony which usually caused the most recalcitrant to move. Not so Mr O'Brien's United Irishmen—they wedged themselves in with their feet against the seats in front, and absolutely refused to obey. The Sergeant then procured the services of some of the attendants, and finally a posse of police were marched up the Chamber in single file, and proceeded to carry out the twelve members, several of whom struggled violently amid shouts and cheers and cries of "shame" and "God save Ireland." The vote was then carried, and the House, disgusted at the spectacle it had just witnessed, adjourned.

It was not pleasant to see the police called in to keep order in the House of Commons. Nothing of the kind had happened, so far as I am aware, since the days of the Long Parliament and Cromwell. The action of the Speaker in having recourse to such a measure was much criticised by all parties at the time, and was never forgiven by the Irish members. It is, however, difficult to see what else he could have done. He might, of course, have taken the law into his own hands, as Speaker Brand did on a celebrated occasion, and have suspended the sitting, or devised some other expedient on the spur of the moment, but by the rules of the House, as they then existed, he could do nothing else than what he actually did. That very useful power of temporarily suspending the sitting, which existed in most continental assemblies, had not then been introduced into the British House of Commons. Whatever view we may take, there can be no doubt as to the unfortunate effects of this incident on the Speaker himself. Even those members who had most strongly objected to Mr Gully's original elevation to the Chair had learned to respect him as Mr

Speaker. He had proved to be absolutely impartial ; his rulings were marked with great acuteness and discrimination ; he had never shown any signs of weakness. From this moment he seemed to decline. Not that anybody ever questioned his impartiality ; but he appeared to take unduly to heart the criticisms passed on him, especially by a portion of the Liberal Press, for having "sent for the police," and to have lost his nerve to some extent. Certainly he was not the man in an emergency that he had been. Growing shortness of sight added to his difficulties, and had we not had comparatively quiet times in the next two or three years, it is probable that he would have resigned his position sooner than he did.

Two days later, Mr Balfour moved a resolution altering the rules of the House, and inflicting the penalty of suspension for the rest of the session, without the question being put, on any member who forcibly resisted the orders of the Chair. An exciting debate ensued. Mr John Redmond described his party as "a foreign element, a body of men who regarded the House and the Parliament simply as instruments for the oppression of their country," and warned us in his best Napoleonic style that whatever rules we passed, we must not be surprised if the House was injured and degraded owing to their presence, which indeed we never had been. This was too much for some of the Radicals, notably Mr Markham, who said that such a speech was an insult to the Empire, whereupon Mr Willie Redmond ejaculated, "Off with our heads." Lord Hugh Cecil then moved an amendment substituting imprisonment for suspension. He argued with unanswerable logic that violent conduct in the House was a

criminal offence, that if it were committed in the street those who committed it would suffer imprisonment, why, therefore, should there be more lenient treatment when the violence was aggravated by a gross Parliamentary offence? Mr Balfour resisted his cousin's logical plea, arguing that imprisonment might create cheap martyrdom, and Lord Hugh asked permission to withdraw the amendment. This was refused, and when the question was put, some of the Irish shouted "Aye," in order to force a division. Having done so, they proceeded to vote "No," with the result that the figures were, Noes, 426—Ayes, nil! Mr Balfour's original proposal was then put, and carried with some slight modifications.

A few days later we were served with what proved to be the *pièce de résistance* of the session—Mr Brodrick's plan for reorganising the army. Army reform had loomed large at the election, and, as we believed that the war was really over, we expected then that it would be undertaken immediately; but now that it appeared to be far from over, and looked like being prolonged indefinitely, we naturally supposed that the reform would be postponed till after its conclusion. How could the army be reorganised when most of it—all in fact which was of practical value—was engaged in military operations six thousand miles from home? To Mr Brodrick's ardent mind, however, this was no difficulty. He came forward with a complete scheme, thought out in every detail. We were to have six army corps at home, three to be always ready to go abroad. They would have complete Staffs ready to lead them in the field, and accustomed to work together. The Militia were to be increased, and to have a real reserve of 50,000 men added to them. The Yeomanry were to be

increased in numbers and efficiency, put upon a Militia basis, and thoroughly reorganised. Finally, a new kind of force altogether was to be raised, to be called Reserve Battalions, for service in the Mediterranean garrisons, consisting of men who had not only served with the colours, but had also finished their time in the reserve. There were also various changes in uniform, which, like all such changes, were to make it cheaper in future! In introducing his scheme Mr Brodrick made a very lucid and effective speech, on which he was warmly congratulated on all hands. In the debates which followed, however, his scheme was severely criticised. It was generally described as "paper." The six paper army corps became quite proverbial, and with the "Brodrick cap" (the useless and hideous headgear given to the soldier about this time, with the selection of which, I believe, Mr Brodrick had personally nothing to do) and the "Brodrick recruit" (an undersized fellow, due to a lowering of the standard) became imperishably associated with his name. Paper indeed they remained, for the troops composing them continued in South Africa for two years more, and when they returned Mr Brodrick ceased to be War Minister, and his successor, Mr Arnold Forster, abolished them. He abolished, indeed, everything else in the Brodrick scheme except the reforms in the Yeomanry, which were carried out most successfully, and which must always stand to Mr Brodrick's credit. At the same time it must in justice be recognised that many of his proposals were excellent in themselves. His plan of a regularly appointed Staff, working together in peace time and not hastily improvised on the outbreak of war; his Reserve Battalions, whereby it was possible to increase largely the number of

men serving with the colours, without depleting the Reserve; and his attempt to put the Militia on a proper basis, were all sound proposals, which, however, thanks to the war and to Mr Arnold Forster, were never really tested in practice.

The debate on the Army Estimates had to be curtailed in order that the necessary votes should be got through before the close of the financial year. Owing to the very late meeting of the House, and the prolongation of the debate on the Address, the Government were sadly pressed for time. The Opposition agreed to this course on Mr Balfour's offering to set apart three days for the discussion of Mr Brodrick's proposals after Easter. As it was, we voted the enormous sum of £87,000,000 for the army after three days' debate, most of which, moreover, was taken up by the discussion of extraneous subjects. The £87,000,000 included, of course, the amount required for war services, viz., £58,000,000, which was based on the assumption that the war would last four months more! So happily optimistic remained our War Office! Questions relating to the war chiefly occupied the attention of members, and for two days the House spent its time in discussing the case of Sir Henry Colvile, who had been dismissed from the command of Gibraltar in consequence of the unfavourable opinion recorded by Lord Roberts on his action in the Sanna's Post and Lindley occurrences the year before. Sir Henry Colvile now posed as a martyr, and his case was eagerly championed by most members of the Opposition, and a few Ministerialists. On the merits of the case, which is a matter of military judgment, I do not propose to express any opinion, but on the main question of the right of the Commander-in-Chief to

use his discretion as to who is, or is not, fit for command, there can be no room for doubt. The Opposition indeed had long been demanding that officers responsible for "regrettable incidents" should be made to suffer for their ill-luck or inefficiency, and that nobody should hold a command at home who was not considered to be fit to command in war; yet on the first notable occasion upon which Lord Roberts and Mr Brodrick acted upon these principles, their action was questioned in the House, and the leaders in the attack were Messrs Asquith and Lawson Walton! Mr Winston Churchill made an excellent speech in defence of Lord Roberts and the Government, and Mr Brodrick certainly deserves the thanks of the community for the firm line he took, showing clearly that, whatever else might be charged against his administration of the War Office, he was not going to allow society pressure on behalf of individual officers to influence him.

The only other Government debate of any interest before the Easter adjournment took place over the recent peace negotiations between Lord Kitchener and General Botha, which had, unfortunately, come to nothing. Because Sir Alfred Milner and the Government at home had made one or two alterations in Lord Kitchener's original proposals—especially in regard to the amnesty which Lord Kitchener had suggested for the Cape rebels—some of the Opposition endeavoured to fasten the responsibility for the failure of the negotiations on Mr Chamberlain. It was quite clear, however, that the real reason was that the Boers were not yet prepared to give up their independence.

From the war and the possibilities of peace the House turned to Pure Beer. The Bill upon this

subject was introduced on the present occasion by Mr Purvis, supported by Mr Chaplin and Sir Cuthbert Quilter, its real author. Sir Cuthbert's speeches on the Pure Beer Bill had indeed become quite an institution in the House, and many members who were supporters of the measure hoped in their hearts that it would never pass, as, if it did, Sir Cuthbert's mission would be gone. With quaint diction and slight stammer, Sir Cuthbert always amused the House, though whether his speeches advanced the cause he had at heart or the reverse, it is not so easy to decide. "The origin of b-b-beer, Mr Speaker," he once began, "is lost in remote anti-ti-quity; and the House, Speaker included, laughed outright from the start. He then proceeded (I omit his stammerations), "We hear of it in connection with the learning of the ancient Egyptians. Herodotus speaks of wine made from barley. . . . In our own history the first mention of the subject is found in the reign of Edward the Confessor, when it is duly recorded in Doomsday Book as follows:—'Malam cerevisiam faciens in cathedra ponebatur stercoris'—that is, 'for making bad beer a brewster was put in the muck cart.' " (Roars of laughter.) Then, with mock gravity—"In the Middle Ages beer was not only tasted, but the following primitive method of assaying was adopted: some ale was spilt on a wooden seat and the ale-taster sat on it, attired in leather breeches. If sugar had been added, the taster became so adherent that rising was difficult." (Much laughter.) Then with great seriousness, Sir Cuthbert added, "It is within the bounds of possibility, Mr Speaker, that a plentiful supply of sugar and beer has been the cause of several members of this House sticking to their seats."

I do not know that I ever heard the House laugh so much as they did at this passage, which was made much more funny by the way in which it was said. Sir Cuthbert's speeches on pure beer were indeed always excellent, though this particular one, which was delivered a few years before, was undoubtedly his *chef-d'œuvre*. The pity was that he did not introduce into his proposals some such plan of "assaying beer" as was mentioned—for some test was sorely needed, the great defect of the Bill, which had really much to recommend it from the agricultural and temperance standpoints, being the difficulty of detecting the presence of substitutes for barley malt and hops. It was, moreover, always opposed by the brewing interest, a strong fraternity; and scientists like Sir Michael Foster, who regarded the making of anything out of something different from what the public expected, as progress, objected to it. On the present occasion, with the aid of the arsenical poisoning at Manchester it obtained a second reading, and its fortunes continued to interest the House till the very end of the session, when, notwithstanding the benevolent neutrality of the Government, it was crowded out.

We had now reached the Easter recess, and the Government's legislative programme, such as it was, had made absolutely no progress. The obstructive tactics of the newly returned Nationalists had been flagrant in the extreme; some of them, and notably a certain Mr O'Mara, possessing a positive genius for wasting time. Mr O'Mara spoke upon every subject, and never for less than three-quarters of an hour. The House emptied the moment he rose, but members found him still on his legs on their return after a comfortable pipe in the smoking-room. We were already

saying to each other that there must be drastic reform in procedure. Apart, however, from Irish obstruction, little progress could have been made, for the war, the necessity of finding sinews for the war, and the future settlement of South Africa, overshadowed everything else.

We returned after a week's holiday to hear Sir Michael Hicks-Beach expound his Budget. Sir Michael's task was rather different from what it had been in his early days of large surpluses. He had now a deficit of fifty-five millions, due, of course, chiefly to the war, but largely also to the progressive rise in our normal expenditure. Sir Michael spoke with his usual clearness and candour. He had still his glass of port to sustain him. He did not attempt to conceal the unsatisfactory condition of our finances. He dwelt upon it, and made the statement, which perhaps in the future will be regarded as epoch-making, that having regard to the ever-growing cost of running the Empire the present basis of taxation was not wide enough, and he proposed to widen it by imposing taxes in the present year on sugar and exported coal. Thus from a convinced Free Trader came the first symptom of revolt from the effects of the narrow Cobdenism of the last forty years; but he added with emphasis that West Indian sugar would not be exempt from the sugar duty. It was not known outside the narrowest circles that Mr Chamberlain was even then urging preferential trade for the Colonies.

The Budget was badly received; it was clear that the nation was getting sick of the war, or at least of the cost of it. Mr Ernest Beckett, always an independent member and an authority on finance, raised the standard of revolt. The Government

majority fell to forty, on the Coal Tax resolution chiefly, however, owing to slack attendance. If all members had responded to the Party Whips as I did that night, the Government would have been defeated. But our large majority and the difficulty we always experienced in getting pairs made us all take a night off occasionally, hoping that nothing would go wrong ; and I confess that having had to sit through every Budget for six years and being now free, I preferred the attractions of an old college dinner on this occasion. But it was perfectly wrong ; and this tendency to take things easy on the part of the rank and file contributed largely to our disasters later on. I must add in self-defence, however, that if others had been as seldom absent unpaired as I was, there would have been no such difficulties at all.

Notwithstanding their bad reception in the House, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposals, which included a fourteen-penny income tax and a fresh loan of no less than sixty millions, were generally acquiesced in, with the exception of the Coal Tax. Masters and men vied with each other in declaring that the coal industry would be destroyed by this absurdly small impost of 1s. a ton. In vain Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and Mr Gerald Balfour quoted figures showing the extraordinary prosperity of the coal trade, especially the export trade, which had quadrupled in the last thirty years. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain actually ordered a general strike unless the proposal were withdrawn, a great blunder from their own point of view, for the whole country resented such an attempt at intimidation, and the Federation ought to have known better than to try to intimidate Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. The Chancellor made one concession, however, which

was eminently fair, he exempted contracts made before the Budget from the operation of the tax. He also received much encouragement from the public generally outside the colliery districts, in whose view the tax would either restrict export or would not; if it did not, the foreigner would pay it; if it did, no harm would be done, in view of the fact that our coal-fields could not last for ever, and a great proportion of what we exported was steam coal, which foreign nations bought for their navies. From the colliery districts, too, he received some encouragement, notably at a by-election which occurred just now in the Monmouth Boroughs (chief of which is Newport, one of the greatest coal exporting centres), at which, notwithstanding the clamour over the tax, the Unionist candidate, Mr Joseph Lawrence, was returned by a substantial majority. As Mr Lawrence walked up the House to take his seat he gave a significant look at the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which was much noticed at the time. The debates on the Budget were long and tedious, and it was amusing to notice millionaire Liberal colliery owners like Sir James Joicey posing as martyrs; but with admirable patience and good temper Sir Michael forced his proposals through, and as a result the export of coal continued to increase, while the new tax brought in over two millions a year.

Shortly after the introduction of the Budget, the promised debate on Mr Brodrick's army proposals took place. Three days were devoted to it. It was only interesting as displaying the first signs of revolt on the part of a group of Unionist members who, led by Mr Winston Churchill (already a power in the House), had banded themselves together in favour of economy, and in particular to resist the

growth of expenditure on the Army. The most prominent of this band were Mr W. Churchill, Mr Ernest Beckett, Sir J. Dickson-Poynder, Mr Vicary Gibbs, Mr Goulding, and Sir Gilbert Parker, the well-known author, who had been returned to the House for the first time at the last General Election as member for Gravesend, and had at once displayed Parliamentary ability. The bomb-shell of Tariff Reform has since scattered this little set in various directions, but at this time they were in close confederation. During this debate Mr Winston Churchill appealed to the doctrines of economy which his father had professed, and which caused his downfall, and Mr Brodrick devoted some time in his reply to refuting them. The division was on party lines; we all voted for Mr Brodrick's army corps, though we knew they were paper and likely to continue so.

Another little set which rose into prominence about this time was that known as the "Hooligans," sometimes spelt "Hughligans," from the erroneous idea that the name was derived from Lord Hugh Cecil. All sorts of members were at times supposed to be Hughligans (the *Spectator* once did me the honour of including me); but as a matter of fact I believe the only *bonâ fide* members of this brotherhood were five in number: Lord Hugh Cecil, Lord Percy, Mr Winston Churchill, the Hon. Arthur Stanley, and Mr Ian Malcolm. Of these five the first three were without doubt the three most brilliant young men who had entered the House for many years: it would be idle flattery to place the other two in the same category. The Hughligans were always ready to take an independent line, and to fight the Government in debate *à outrance*, while

at the same time maintaining a perfect loyalty to Mr Balfour and respect for his leadership. They were really largely a supper club, and it was said in the lobbies that Mr Malcolm's special function was to pay for the suppers. But this I do not know. Here again Tariff Reform has worked havoc, Mr W. Churchill being now a Liberal, Mr A. Stanley and Lord Percy Tariff Reformers, the former more of the Chamberlainite, the latter of the Balfourian order; Lord Hugh Cecil, an out-and-out Free Trader; while Mr Malcolm once explained to me that he occupied a midway position between Mr Balfour and the Free Fooders. I confess I could not find the place on any map. But this is anticipation. Another young man who made rather a splash just now was Mr Claude Lowther, who had been recommended for the V.C. in the war. He was constantly urging Sir Michael Hicks-Beach to put an enormously heavy contribution towards the war on the mining magnates, who he assured the House could afford any amount. He did not mind how late he kept the House sitting in advocating this pleasing plan. He was also a playwright, and some time after this had a piece called "The Gordian Knot" produced by Mr Tree at His Majesty's Theatre. The play was a failure, and only ran one week; but whether the fault was Mr Lowther's or Mr Tree's was a point which was never satisfactorily settled in the lobby. Some malevolent Parliamentarian, however, who apparently took Mr Tree's part, was unkind enough to nickname it "The Claudian Rot."

The next subject to occupy our attention was Education. I have already mentioned the Cockerton judgment, in itself, seemingly, a small matter, but

destined to prove a turning-point in our educational system, and in the career of the Unionist Government. It was briefly this. Elementary school managers, and especially the School Boards in large towns, had been in the habit of going beyond the limits of what was strictly "elementary" education, by giving science and art classes, and establishing higher grade schools and evening continuation schools, which were attended by persons many of whom were far beyond school age. In this they had been encouraged by the Education Department, and received grants from the Science and Art Branch. Now it appeared more than doubtful whether a rate levied by the Act of 1870 could legally be applied for education other than elementary, and a committee of members of Parliament and others not greatly enamoured of the Board School system was formed to test the question, the result being that Mr Cockerton, an auditor of the Local Government Board, who by his action has earned a celebrity usually denied to his class, disallowed the payments made by the London School Board for these purposes, and surcharged them on the members of the Board themselves. The London School Board appealed, but the appeal went against them. Thus the whole existing machinery of science and art classes and evening continuation schools, so elaborately built up by enterprising School Boards at the ratepayers' expense, fell at one blow.

The Government have often been blamed for touching education at all in the 1900 Parliament, for which it is said they had no mandate. The Cockerton judgment, however, made it imperative that they should do something, and they were undoubtedly right in trying to make a complete and

permanent settlement of the whole question. They might, of course, have cut the knot very easily by legalising the action of the School Boards, and this is what most of the Opposition, with whom the School Board system was a sort of fetish, would like to have seen done. Lord Salisbury and Mr Balfour, however, had never loved School Boards, which now that we had a complete system of popular local Government had become a sort of *imperium in imperio*, and it will be remembered that it was proposed in the 1896 Bill that they should be subjected to the rating authorities. It was, moreover, generally felt that the time had come for the co-ordination of schools of all grades, with a strong local authority to control them. To "legalise Cockerton" would have been to establish the School Boards in this position. The Government naturally decided against this course.

They accordingly determined to establish Local Authorities based upon the Borough and County Councils, but in the first instance to give them control only of non-elementary education, and to allow the School Boards and Voluntary school managers to continue to be the authorities for elementary schools. The Cockerton schools and classes were in the interval to be carried on by the School Boards—the County Councils finding the money. On May 7, Sir John Gorst, who, even though the Committee of Council on Education had been abolished by the Board of Education Act, remained Vice-President of it, having carefully constructed a little niche for himself, introduced the Bill in one of those speeches which said so little but hinted at so much. Though the actual provisions of the Bill went so short a distance, it was clear that they opened the way for far greater changes, and the Opposition quite

properly read in his speech, and so did we, but with different feelings, the destruction of the School Board system. Mr Bryce, Dr Macnamara, and Mr Yoxall fell upon the Bill with fury, while the blessings of Sir R. Jebb and other Unionists were mild in the extreme, and were rather indicative of hopes for better things in future.

I may as well finish at once the story of this unhappy proposal. It was still-born. In the long debates on the war and on the Budget which followed after the Whitsuntide recess it got crowded out, and in view of the fierce opposition to it Mr Balfour at the end of July decided to withdraw it entirely, except the temporary provisions relating to the Cockerton schools, which were reintroduced as the Education (No. 2) Bill. Even this was violently opposed, the Opposition professing to fear that friction would arise between the School Boards and the local rating authorities, but being really afraid of the threatened extinction of the School Boards. Sir John Gorst, moreover, in his speech in moving the second reading (July 8) succeeded in rousing their passions to the uttermost. I have never heard such a speech from a Minister, and though I think I agreed with most of it, he appeared to be simply throwing petroleum on the flames. He began by minimising the effect of the Cockerton judgment, showing how few schools and scholars would really be affected, and proceeded to attack the evening continuation schools of the London School Board, some of which he said "were extremely bad schools, which might be closed with great advantage to the public education of the country." Dancing seemed to be the chief object of many of them, and he related how he had visited one when "the Con-

solidated Fund was being danced away." "I was told," he proceeded, "a pathetic story the other day about a poor girl who was very fond of dancing, but the rule of the school was that she could not attend the regular dances unless she was in some other class. She went from class to class, but from each, after a short probation, she was turned out by the teacher for incompetence. Yet by means of flitting from class to class she succeeded in attending regularly the dancing, in which I am glad to say she was not inefficient." Then, turning to the School Boards themselves, he asked, "Are we to keep up in this House the farce that School Boards are elected for educational purposes? Everybody knows that educational purposes are the very last ideas in the minds of members of School Boards." These remarks were mostly true, and they caused great merriment on our side of the House, and must have given great joy to Sir J. Gorst himself. But they were not very wise. They lashed Radical "Educationalists" like Dr Macnamara, Mr Bryce, and Mr George White into fury. They all complained of having been "greatly pained" by Sir John's speech, and they certainly looked like it. Heated debates followed, and a whole week was spent over a trumpery little measure which might have been passed in a day.

The net result of these proceedings was that the Government passed their temporary Bill, and lost a good deal of credit by dropping their permanent measure. They had also succeeded in arousing a great deal of suspicion and hostility on the Opposition benches, where members were deeply stirred by the covert attack on the School Boards. The Education question, in fact, at once reunited the

Opposition, which on the question of the war had nearly fallen to pieces. At the very time that these education debates were going on, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, supported by Sir William Harcourt and Mr J. Morley, was making his "methods of barbarism" speech at the National Reform Union, in reply to which the Liberal Imperialists organised the Asquith dinner, a source of great embarrassment to many of the flabbier members of the Liberal rank and file, who did not like to go for fear of offending "C. B." or not to go for fear of offending Mr Asquith; while between the two Lord Rosebery dashed unexpectedly in with a speech at the City Liberal Club, which so exasperated both sides that nothing short of Sir John Gorst on School Boards could ever have brought them together again. One eminently true remark Lord Rosebery made, *viz.*, that for the present he must plough his furrow alone. He has probably done so longer than he expected.

The Liberal dissensions on the war outside the House were reflected in the Chamber. On June 17 a debate took place on the Concentration Camps, on the motion of Mr Lloyd-George, who at the time vied with the Irish Nationalists and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in his abuse of everything British in South Africa. There had undoubtedly been great mortality in some of the camps, which, however, would have been far greater if the Boer women and children had been left unprotected on the veldt; Mr Lloyd-George actually suggested that what had occurred in the camps "had earned for Sir A. Milner his peerage." Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman supported his fiery Welsh follower; but Mr Haldane spoke against the motion,

regretting the use of the term "barbarism," etc., and when the division bell rang he and the rest of the Liberal Imperial confraternity, including Sir E. Grey, Mr Asquith, Mr Robson, and Mr Perks—the last-named a very pronounced Nonconformist, whose somewhat unexpected views on the war had earned for him the soubriquet of "Imperial Perks"—showed their disapproval of it in the regular Liberal Imperial style of abstaining from voting altogether.

Then a violent debate took place on July 4 on the second reading of the Bill authorising the loan of sixty millions, in the course of which Mr W. Redmond, imitating the bad example set by Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, described our soldiers as doing "hellish work" in South Africa; which, after all, was not so serious a statement as the general charge conveyed against the Government, generals, and everybody concerned, by the expression "methods of barbarism." Mr Lloyd-George—who had taken part a few days before in a pro-Boer demonstration at the Queen's Hall, addressed by Messrs Sauer and Merriman, the representatives of the Afrikander Bond, at which a resolution was carried demanding complete independence for the Boers—took the same line, and had the hardihood to deny that any Liberal M.P. had ever advocated independence. Asked by Mr Brodrick if he voted against the Queen's Hall resolution, he maintained a discreet silence. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman followed with what Mr Balfour well described as a "frankly pro-Boer speech." The Opposition leader raised the question of the war again in Committee of Supply on August 2, specially condemning the Concentration Camps, and urging that we should again offer terms to the Boers. In

reply, Mr Chamberlain showed the necessity for the Concentration Camps, having regard to the abnormal conditions of the war, and stated that every attempt was being made to reduce the mortality. As to the suggestion of reopening negotiations, he utterly refused to agree to any such proposal, which would only be regarded as weakness by the Boers. Mr Lloyd-George followed with another of his pro-Boer speeches, whereupon Sir Edward Grey rose, and began with the exceedingly frank statement that he and his hon. friend (Mr Lloyd-George) had never approached South African affairs from the same point of view since the commencement of the war. After this the Nationalists tried to shout him down, and only the repeated intervention of the Chairman enabled him to get a hearing at all, while he gave a general support to the policy of the Government, thus again showing his independence of his nominal leader. Mr Chamberlain's speech on this occasion was of a very hopeful character, and in the course of it he announced that the depletion of the Boer forces amounted to about 2000 a month, and that the block-house system lately introduced by Lord Kitchener was proving a success. These statements were very well received in the House, and had a good effect in the country.

The session was now rapidly drawing to a close, and we were in fact released from our labours on August 17, but there are one or two minor matters which I must mention. For the first time for ten years a place was obtained in the private members' ballot for the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. It was evident that in the new Parliament a determined effort was going to be made to get this measure through by a small knot of members, and

though the great majority of the House were apathetic or indifferent, and there was no popular enthusiasm in the country for the Bill, it was practically certain that the greater number of those who would trouble to vote at all would support it, which, combined with the fact that it had recently been carried in the House of Lords, made the situation extremely dangerous. The second reading was moved on April 24 by Sir Brampton Gurdon, one of the many ex-private secretaries of Mr Gladstone, who spoke most earnestly on the subject, and was very angry with me because in moving the rejection I inadvertently referred to him as the "Hon. Baronet opposite" (he was really a K.C.M.G.); apparently he shared the old idea, whence derived I know not, that all baronets were wicked. The debate was remarkable chiefly for two most eloquent speeches made by Lord Percy and Lord Hugh Cecil respectively, in opposition to the Bill. Lord Hugh's was indeed more of a sermon than a speech, and reached heights that only he can aspire to ;—it was remarked that the House would not have listened to such a speech from any other member. Notwithstanding this, the second reading was carried by a majority of 157, no less than 369 members being absent from the division. The Bill, however, got no further. We successfully resisted the motion for sending it to a Grand Committee, and on the two days allotted after Whitsuntide for the further consideration of private members' bills, it was hopelessly blocked by long discussions on other measures which had been through Grand Committee, and stood therefore in front of it. So effectually was this done that one of these Bills, a small measure for the regulation of crematoria, to which there was no objection *per se*,

was accidentally talked out itself, much to the annoyance of its supporters. The Cremation Bill was, indeed, cremated by the Deceased Wife's Sister; and for the rest of this Parliament private members with legislative ambitions realised that their pet measures had no chance if the Deceased Wife's Sister stood behind them.

Another private members' bill—the Children's Bill—which forbade young children to go to public-houses to fetch beer, was more fortunate, and, thanks to the benevolence of the Government, it became law, with considerable modifications.

In another matter the Government showed deplorable weakness. The one really important measure which they succeeded in passing this session was an Act for amending the law relating to factories and workshops. One of the clauses of the Bill as originally introduced largely extended the control of the Home Office over steam laundries—a very desirable change, I believe—but in Grand Committee Mr W. Redmond moved an amendment exempting laundries connected with religious or charitable institutions, which Mr Ritchie, who was in charge of the Bill, accepted. Immediately on the return of the measure to the House there was an outcry. It was felt that a drastic concession had been made to religious prejudices, and the Protestant feeling ran high. A *modus vivendi*, however, was offered by Mr J. G. Talbot, the senior member for Oxford University, who, in the interests of the reformatory institutions of the Church of England, proposed that the exemption should only apply when the Home Secretary was satisfied that the new regulations would be subversive of discipline, and this com-

promise was accepted by the English Roman Catholics. But Mr Redmond would have none of it; and Mr Ritchie accordingly dropped the clause altogether, thus depriving laundry workers of the benefits of the Bill. I confess we felt very small, with our boasted big majority, and wondered more and more why it was that our Front Bench so often gave us away in vainly trying to reconcile the most irreconcilable of our opponents.

Shortly before the prorogation an unusual incident took place. Mr Armstrong and Mr Madge, the editor and publisher of the *Globe*, were summoned to the Bar of the House, and reprimanded by the Speaker for an article which had appeared two days before, in which the Irish Party were compared to Tammany Hall, and accused of personal corruption, and which was held to be a breach of privilege. It was a curious sight to see them—Captain Armstrong apparently very nervous; Mr Madge, round-faced and gold-spectacled, looking defiant. Both of them expressed regret, and apologised when called upon to do so.

Two days later we separated for the holidays. The session had, indeed, been a barren one from the legislative standpoint; but so long as the war lasted nobody expected legislation, and indeed it can scarcely be said that the Parliament of 1900 was elected to legislate on any particular subject at all. The prolongation of the war and its great continuing expense were a bitter disappointment to Parliament and the nation, yet it can scarcely be contended that the Government had lost ground; the people were still determined to see the war through, and had complete confidence in Mr Chamberlain, who stood higher now than ever. The War, the dissensions in

the Liberal Party, the Concentration Camps, and the Coal Tax were the subjects which had excited most interest; but the political event of the year which was destined to have the greatest effect in the future was none of these, but was the Cockerton judgment. We shall hear more of this in our next chapter.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE SESSION OF 1902, THE EDUCATION ACT OF THAT YEAR, AND THE SECOND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MINISTRY

THE recess of 1901-1902 was not an exciting time politically. There were indeed no political questions involving direct party conflict on the *tapis*. The Government Education Bill, which had caused some temporary excitement, and had for the space of a week reunited the Opposition, had been dropped; and though it was understood that the Government would reintroduce it, and probably extend its scope so as to include elementary education, people did not trouble themselves much about it. The British public have a constitutional limitation, which prevents them from fixing their attention on more than one question at a time, and for the present the ever-continuing war was the one and only question. We seemed to have settled down to a state of permanent war. We had weekly reports of Boers captured, stock taken, commandos dispersed, and so forth, varied by occasional regrettable incidents when De Wet or another of the Boer generals in the field surprised and defeated one of our many insufficiently mobile columns. The War Office preserved an admirable optimism, and the nation a most stoical demeanour. The chief sufferers

were the Liberal Opposition, who were more than ever rent asunder, though Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was still conveniently blind to the fact that there was any division in the ranks at all, while invariably supporting the pro-Boer faction himself. Just before the end of the year, a great flutter was created by a speech of Lord Rosebery's at Chesterfield. Six weeks before its actual delivery it was announced that, having regard to the serious condition of national affairs, he had been prevailed upon to reappear in public, and to "throw his ideas into the common stock."

Lord Rosebery's conduct at this period bore a sort of inverted resemblance to that of a great actor or music-hall star, who was always making his positively last appearance. In the political world he was always making his positive reappearance, and consequently drawing great attention to himself; but he continued to do it over and over again, and seems to be doing it still. In his Chesterfield speech he appeared in a garb indistinguishable from that of a Liberal Unionist—frankly opposing Home Rule, and approving of the policy of the war, and especially of Lord Milner; but at the same time claiming that the Government were unbusiness-like in their conduct of it, and holding up "national efficiency" as the Liberal ideal of the future. How he imagined that greater efficiency could be obtained from the Liberals, the majority of whom were bitterly opposed to the continuance of the war altogether, it is difficult to conceive, nor indeed was the war record of the party (as shown by such past events as Majuba Hill and Khartoum) exactly one of efficiency. The speech was greatly applauded by the Liberal Imperialists, and equally resented by the other section of the

Opposition, who clearly thought that he was attempting to oust Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman from the leadership, as in a sort of undecided and inefficient way he probably was.

The House met early in 1902—January 16. We began, as we had for several years past, by an amendment moved by Mr James Lowther to the usual sessional order preventing Peers from taking part in Parliamentary elections, an order which was frequently hallowed in the breach. There was much in Mr Lowther's contention, that as the order was sessional only, it did not technically apply during the prorogation of Parliament, nor during a General Election, so that it might be rendered quite nugatory; but there was much also in Mr Balfour's, that its existence caused Peers to interfere in such contests less frequently than would otherwise be the case. Mr Lowther was as usual defeated in the lobby, and we proceeded to the Address.

The King's Speech this year promised quite a large amount of legislation. We were to have an important measure to "improve and co-ordinate Primary and Secondary Education." We were also promised a London Water Bill, an Irish Land Bill, a Licensing Bill, and various minor measures. The Government had also announced that some drastic reforms of Procedure in the House of Commons would be brought forward. We very soon, however, found ourselves discussing the war, and the Opposition put down an amendment which was to lead to a memorable fiasco. It had been artfully drafted by the Party Whips or by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman himself, with a view to uniting the whole Liberal Party, and was in these words:—"That this House, while prepared to support all proper measures for the

effective prosecution of the war in South Africa, is of the opinion that the course pursued by your Majesty's Ministers, and their attitude with regard to a settlement, has not conduced to the early termination of the war, and the establishment of a durable peace." The mover was Mr Cawley, a Lancashire member not very well known in debate, but evidently a stalwart follower of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman. We came down in full force to witness the reunion of the Liberal Party, but for a time the debate was an exceedingly mild one. Mr Cawley proved the truth of one of Lord Beaconsfield's sayings that, Parliamentary speaking, like playing the fiddle, requires practice, and he did not seem quite to know what the amendment meant, nor for that matter did we. Mr McKenna, who seconded, tried to put everybody right, Lord Rosebery included. At length Mr Chamberlain got up and made one of the best speeches he has ever made, justifying the policy of the Government all along the line. Perhaps his strongest point was contained in an extract he read from a despatch of Lord Kitchener's, in which he said that he was compelled to form the much-abused Concentration Camps by General Botha, who insisted on every burgher joining him, threatening otherwise to confiscate their property "and leave their families on the veldt." Then came the *dénouement*. Mr Labouchere attacked the amendment violently, on the ground that he could not vote for measures for the effective prosecution of a war of which he disapproved. Mr Dillon next moved an amendment to the amendment, and the Opposition Whips told against it, and it was defeated. Finally, Mr Lloyd-George, who was as consistent an opponent of the war as he has always been of the Established Church,

showed up the hypocrisy of the whole business. In the end a division was taken, and the Government obtained a majority of no less than 210, not only the Nationalists and the extreme pro-Boers, but also the Liberal Imperialists abstaining, *more suo*. It was not exactly a triumph for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman; but at that time we all underrated his extraordinary tenacity of purpose.

We had many other discussions on the Address, the debate on which lasted three weeks, some of them interesting. They ranged from food supplies in times of war to telephones, and from Malta to Persia. In the last-named country Mr Joseph Walton had recently been travelling, and he made a long speech about it, which was at least a welcome change from China. Ireland, it need hardly be said, was not forgotten, and provided Mr Wyndham with an opportunity of delivering one of his beautifully phrased speeches, which, as it gave satisfaction neither to the Nationalists nor to the Ulster Party, was probably an exceedingly wise one. The former wanted compulsory land purchase, the latter vigorous coercion of the United Irish League; but Mr Wyndham was unable to oblige either. Lastly, the question of Redistribution cropped up, as it was destined to do throughout the Parliament, the mover of the amendment being Mr Louis Sinclair, who had the misfortune to represent 40,000 voters in Romford, while the member for Newry represented only 1700. Mr Kimber, the member for Wandsworth, who had made this subject particularly his own, supported the amendment in an excellent speech. Mr Balfour was sympathetic, but suggested that the matter was one for the end rather than the beginning of a Parliament.

At length the debate on the Address was finished, and we settled down to serious business. The session, which was abnormally long, now divided itself into two unequal parts ; the first, which lasted up to Easter, being occupied with various matters of minor political importance, of which the new Rules of Procedure were the chief ; the latter, which continued with intervals till December, being almost entirely taken up with the Education Bill. The second part was interrupted by such important events as the termination of the war, the King's illness and Coronation, the retirement of Lord Salisbury, the consequent second reconstruction of the Government, and the Colonial Conference. I shall hasten over the first part as quickly as possible.

The new Procedure Rules were the direct result of the Irish obstruction last session. The new spirit manifested by the Nationalist Party had made the conduct of Parliamentary business and especially of legislation almost impossible, and, though this may be an advantage to Conservatives in some respects, the Government had the full concurrence of the party in attempting to remedy it. Their actual proposals, however, as explained by Mr Balfour on January 30, did not meet with such ready acquiescence. Briefly they were as follows :—The House in future to meet at 2, and to adjourn at 7.15 till 9, every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Government business to come on at 2.25 on each of these days, private bills and motions for adjournment being put off till the evening sitting ; questions to take place after midnight, except important queries on the conduct of business, which would be taken at the beginning. The short day to be on Fridays, the House then sitting from 12 to 5.30, as

previously on Wednesdays. Two evening sittings a week up to Easter, and one a week between Easter and Whitsuntide, to be given to private members for resolutions, and all Fridays up to Whitsuntide for Bills. Thursdays to be devoted to Supply. The suspension of a member to be for twenty days for the first offence, forty for the second, and eighty for the third; and a suspended member not to be allowed to take his seat again until he had apologised to the Speaker and expressed regret. The Speaker to have the power to suspend a sitting temporarily if he thought desirable. A Deputy-Chairman to be appointed, who should also have the right to act as Deputy-Speaker.

Such were the chief proposals, which were designed to give the Government of the day four clear morning sittings each week from the beginning of the session, without the possibility of interruption; to enable them to take further time as the session proceeded, without the necessity for a motion to that effect and consequent debate; and to stop the waste of time by questions, by banishing them to the end of the sitting. They further aimed at increasing the Speaker's powers of keeping order, and at rendering the life of a member—who in Mr Balfour's phrase never knew now when he was going to dine or when he would get to bed—more comfortable in the future by providing him with a regular dinner interval, and by enabling him to spend a long week-end out of town by the conversion of Wednesdays into Fridays.

Certain points, however, evoked a great deal of criticism. Members intensely disliked the postponement of questions, the House of Commons being, in Sir William Harcourt's favourite phrase, "the great inquest of the nation"; and so vigorously did certain

supporters of the Government press this point that Mr Balfour gave way, and allowed questions to take place at the commencement of business as heretofore, up to five minutes to three. Other members objected to the definite invasion of rights previously possessed (in name at least) by private members—though as a matter of fact the proposed Rules merely carried out automatically what had long been the actual practice. On these and other points there was a regular Tory revolt, Mr Chaplin being very prominent ; as was Mr Disraeli, the bearer of an honoured name, who had been a silent member for the most part hitherto, but now displayed considerable debating powers ; while Mr Gibson Bowles excelled himself in his peculiar methods of supporting the Government of his own side. On February 7, when a sort of second reading debate took place, he attacked the Rules all along the line. Furious at the apparent invasion of private members' rights, he described them as "a Radical scheme with all the elements of dictatorship which are sunk deep in every Radical mind." The sole cause of the proposals was that "the Government could not get their followers to attend the House," which was not altogether untrue. He pointed out that in old days every member who deserted the service of the House for three days could be fined £40 and sent to the Tower, and proceeded to quote from some unnamed chronicle as follows :— "On May 13, 1667, this order was put in force in the case of no fewer than fifty-four members, so that the House on that occasion made a haul of no less than £2160, to be handed over to the Sergeant-at-arms. They were not," he added, "undistinguished members. There was a Salisbury amongst them, there was a Churchill, a Wilfrid Lawson ; and

perhaps most distinguished of all, there was a Wanklyn, no doubt the lineal ancestor of the hon. member for Central Bradford." This last hit at a member whose peculiar proceedings had caused Mr Punch to invent a new verb, "to wankle," caused much merriment. Then he turned on Mr Chamberlain. "George IV. when he was Prince of Wales was said to be the first gentleman in Europe. The Colonial Secretary is undoubtedly the first gentleman in" — pause — "Birmingham." This might have been funny, it was certainly lacking in good taste. Still, in its own particular style, this speech of Mr Bowles was a masterpiece. It was quite the best of his many performances in the House.

So lengthy did these debates become, that it seemed as if the Government would lose much more time in the present session by the discussion of the new Rules than they would gain by their passage. At length Mr Balfour was taken ill, and the discussion adjourned till after Easter. In their final form the Rules were passed much as they were proposed, with the exception of the questions rule already mentioned. They undoubtedly gave the Government more public time and more certainty, and in this way conduced to the transaction of business, but, so far from making the lot of the ordinary member easier, they added greatly to his burdens. The dinner adjournment was too short to be of real use, especially as under the old Rules any member who wanted to dine out could generally get a pair for a reasonable time. Now it was necessary to be back at 9 o'clock sharp, otherwise the Opposition, fertile in resources, might spring a snap division, and the Government be defeated. From 9 to 10

became a most dangerous time, and the Whips, who could not get their men back punctually when once they had let them go unpaired, found it necessary to adopt all sorts of devices to keep debates going until they had a majority in the House, so that we had frequently, especially towards the end of the Parliament, the undignified spectacle of the Government deliberately wasting time on their own Bills, and some Unionist members, notably Sir Frederick Banbury, made quite a reputation by the skill they displayed in speaking at a moment's notice on any subject. Equally disconcerting was the meeting at 2 o'clock. In the old days when the House met at 3 and questions began at 3.30, it was usually safe to come down about 4.30 or 5, and find that no division had taken place. Now it was necessary to be down by 2.30, as the Opposition made a practice of asking as few questions as possible, and then getting a division on Government business before 3. The period between 2.30 and 3.15 was as embarrassing to the Whips and to members (many of whom had other work to do, and could not conveniently be down so early) as was the time between 9 and 10. Again, questions were often interesting, and it was annoying to miss them, but one had to be down very early not to do so. For my part, I consider that the new Rules added largely to the labour and worries of the average member's life; and if I were asked to name the chief causes of the disintegration of our party in the later years of this Parliament, I should without hesitation include the operation of the new Rules.

An interlude which took place in the debates on the new Procedure did not add to the reputation of the Government. Sir Blundell Maple had made a

speech, in which he had called attention to the absurdly high prices paid for horses purchased in Hungary for the Imperial Yeomanry, and had suggested that there must have been some corruption on the part of the officers and others engaged in the work. A committee was appointed to investigate these allegations, and their report was issued just after the beginning of the session. It was not an altogether satisfactory document, for while it found that Sir Blundell Maple's statements were in the main true, and that great waste of public money had taken place, it seemed to fix the responsibility on nobody in particular, and it contained a passage censuring Sir Blundell Maple for having made statements which were "universally understood to be direct attacks on the honour and integrity of British officers." A series of heated debates immediately took place in the House, the Supplementary War Office votes furnishing the opportunity. Hostile criticism was not confined to the Opposition; Mr James Lowther describing the committee as a "white-washing committee," while Mr Gibson Bowles said it was "tame and bleating." Mr Brodrick's handling of the situation was not happy, and there seemed to be a sort of notion that the Government were trying to hush up scandals. I am sure that this was absolutely untrue, and that the reason for refusing a full inquiry then, viz., that nearly all the witnesses were in South Africa, was a perfectly sound one; but the Government would have been wiser if they had conceded a little more to public sentiment in this and similar matters. They were already getting out of touch with opinion in the country, much to the regret of many of their best supporters.

Quite early in the session the Deceased Wife's

Sister made her reappearance, her backers having been again successful in the ballot. The debate was very much a repetition of that of last year, the same speakers using the same arguments; but a diversion was made by Captain Jessell, the member for South St Pancras. This gallant member had married one of eight sisters, and was much nettled by a statement made by an opponent of the Bill, that most ladies were opposed to it. "I have seven sisters-in-law," he exclaimed, "and they all approve of it." "No wonder in your case," muttered some sarcastic member. The termination of the debate was marked by a curious incident, which caused violent indignation in the *Daily News* and other newspapers. As the Bill had been debated at considerable length last year, and the second reading had been carried by a large majority, the Speaker intimated privately that he should give the closure in time to allow the Bill to go to a Grand Committee, thus greatly increasing its chances of passing. Great annoyance was felt at this, which was increased when, at 4.45, on Mr Cripps rising to continue the debate, the closure actually took place. Now, in order that the Bill should go to a Grand Committee, four divisions might be taken—the first on the closure, the second on the amendment to the second reading, the third on the second reading itself, the fourth on the reference to the Committee; and if the first three could be made to occupy all the time up to half-past five, the last could not take place. Consequently the opponents of the measure did not hurry through the lobbies; they had much to discuss with each other, and they walked slowly. The result was that the Bill never got to its Grand Committee at all. There was great and violent indignation, the Speakers'

attention was drawn to the matter, and he uttered a dignified rebuke to the loiterers. It is quite untrue to suggest, however, that the incident was a diabolical or Jesuitical plot hatched by Lord Hugh Cecil and his friends. It was the absolutely spontaneous action of a large number of members who felt that they had not been treated quite fairly. Among the most conspicuous loiterers I saw some of the oldest and most respected members of the Cabinet.

To return to Government business—two violent outbursts occurred quite suddenly shortly before the Easter recess, the conduct of the war being as usual the occasion in each case.

When Mr Brodrick was announcing to the House the sad news of the defeat of Lord Methuen near Klerksdorp by General De la Rey, and the fact that he was wounded and a prisoner, the Irish Nationalists broke out into loud cheers, much to the disgust of members on all sides. It was a disgraceful exhibition, and it need hardly be said that Mr Swift MacNeill took a prominent part in it. We felt it the more keenly because, of all the British generals who had fought in South Africa, no one had excited greater sympathy than Lord Methuen, who seemed to have atoned for his early misfortunes by his strenuous and persistent conduct during the later stages of the war. This one incident appeared to justify for all time the action of the Lords in throwing out the Home Rule Bill in 1893, and of the country in endorsing their action at the subsequent elections, and I hope it will not be forgotten when next a Liberal Ministry proposes Home Rule in any shape or form. A few days later, on the Consolidated Fund No. 1 Bill, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had asked for information, and Mr Chamberlain was replying in a

particularly placid manner. He was showing that many of the Boers were in favour of the termination of hostilities, and quoted a remark of General Vilonel (the leader of the "National Scouts") to the effect that the real enemies of the country were those who were continuing a hopeless struggle. Immediately Mr Dillon shouted out, "He is a traitor." Mr Chamberlain fixed his glass on him. "The honourable member," he proceeded to say in measured tones, "is a—" we all thought he was going to add "traitor himself," but he paused and added, "good judge of traitors." The Speaker was at once appealed to by the infuriated Irishmen, but he refused to call upon Mr Chamberlain to withdraw, deprecating equally the interruption and retort. "Then," said Mr Dillon, as white as a sheet, "I desire to say that the right honourable gentleman is a damned liar." There could be no doubt as to the unparliamentary character of this remark. Mr Dillon refused to withdraw it, and was promptly named and suspended, and left the House. Then as usual in the House of Commons, the comic side came in. When the debate on the new Rules had been adjourned, the Suspension order was under discussion, and the House had agreed to leave out the old provisions as to the period of suspension, but had not inserted the new proposals. Consequently Mr Dillon was simply "suspended," *i.e.*, indefinitely. The next day, however, Mr Balfour undertook to put this right, and Mr Dillon was allowed to return after a week's absence.

This incident, trivial as it was, was just the kind of thing which was "good copy" for the Press, and it caused great excitement in the House. By contrast, an event, the importance of which to the world it is

impossible to estimate, had occurred a month earlier, and been the subject of a very short and perfunctory debate in the House of Commons, viz., the conclusion of the first defensive alliance between Great Britain and Japan. By this treaty the two powers agreed to maintain the independence of China and Korea, and undertook to come to the other's assistance in the event of either being attacked by two other powers while engaged in the defence of their interests in these countries. The announcement was received with general approval, but it was undoubtedly a completely new departure. For the first time for many years we abandoned our "splendid isolation," and entered into what might be termed an "entangling alliance." Then the treaty was clearly directed against Russian aggression, and we had made an agreement with a pagan people in order to checkmate a Christian nation; while from the political standpoint we were helping an Asiatic power to resist, and to resist, as the events proved, successfully, the extension of European influence. There can be no doubt that the British treaty rendered possible the subsequent Japanese victories over Russia. For the time being the policy was eminently successful, and British interests in the Far East were effectually guarded; but what the ultimate result may be, nobody can say. If the rise of Japan proves to be the beginning of a general Asiatic movement against European domination, and if the East once more prevails over the West, thus justifying those statesmen who live in dread of the "Yellow Peril," what will be said of that Western nation which first assisted the movement by allying itself with a Yellow Power? These may be idle speculations; but it was certainly remarkable that the conclusion of the Japanese

treaty was the subject of no more than three hours' somewhat listless debate in the House of Commons.

Two other events of importance occurred before Easter. On March 24, Mr Brodrick announced that Messrs Schalk Burgher and Reitz, and several other Transvaal leaders, had arrived under a flag of truce at Pretoria, and had been allowed by Lord Kitchener to proceed to the Orange River Colony to consult with President Steyn. This was the beginning of the ending of the war. On the same day, by a curious coincidence, Mr Balfour introduced the Education Bill; thus beginning, it may be said, the ending of the Government.

There was a large House to hear him, and it soon became apparent that no limited or tentative measure was intended this session. The Bill was not confined, as that of last year, to higher grade and secondary schools. It was a broad and comprehensive proposal to deal with education as a whole, linking up schools of all grades under local education authorities, which thus became the actual, and not merely the potential successors of the School Boards, which were abolished altogether! This indeed was the effect when the Bill became law; but, as it was originally introduced, the clauses dealing with elementary education were adoptive only on the part of the County and Borough Councils, a provision which clearly showed that the Cabinet were not of one mind as to the wisdom of dealing with elementary education at all. The danger, of course, was that the religious question would be raised if the existing control of primary schools were altered, and the so-called compromise of 1870 upset —a danger which was quickly realised. The most

violent storm arose at once over the proposal to give the Voluntary schools rate-aid—a storm which has not abated yet—and this, it is certain, a section of the Cabinet foresaw and were anxious to avoid. On the other hand, no satisfactory settlement could have been made if the control of elementary education had been excluded. The financial condition of many Voluntary schools was such that they could not have survived any longer, the aid grant of 1897 having been in many cases more than absorbed by the rise in the cost of education which had taken place since, so that the “intolerable strain” had reappeared in a more acute form than ever. Besides which, the co-ordination of schools was greatly needed, in order that the clever and industrious children of poor or humble parents might have the chance of passing on from the elementary to the higher schools, thus mounting the ladder of education. It is remarkable that in all the violent assaults on the Act of 1902, this, which was its central and most important provision, has never been attacked, and in Mr Birrell’s luckless Bill of 1906 it remained untouched. The whole force and fury of the Opposition both in the House and country fell upon two or three clauses of the Bill (which contained nearly thirty), the clauses which dealt with the Voluntary schools. These were to be placed under the control of the Local Education Authorities, who were to be entirely responsible for the secular education given in them, and were to maintain them, as they were to maintain the old Board schools, partly out of the Government grants and partly out of the rates. The local managers, however, of whom two-thirds were to be nominated by the trustees of the schools, and one-third by the local authorities (a

large concession in itself, and much resented by many old-fashioned managers) were to have the appointment of the teachers, with certain restrictions, which carried with it the control of the religious instruction, subject of course to the conscience clause, in return for which they were to provide the school buildings rent free, and to keep them in repair. Immediately the cry was raised that denominational teaching would be supported out of the rates. It was not true, for the annual value of the school buildings provided and their repairs amounted to considerably more than the annual cost of denominational teaching; and even if it were true, why should Nonconformists, who had been supporting Voluntary schools out of Imperial taxes for thirty years without protest, object to doing the same out of rates? As Mr Haldane, who was no denominationalist, asked, where was the moral difference between a tax and a rate? The other objections urged against these clauses were equally baseless. It was not true that the Bill created religious tests for teachers. So far from creating them, it removed them in the case of assistant and pupil teachers in denominational schools, who in future could be appointed without regard to their religious opinions. Nor was it true that public money was voted to schools which were not under public control. The real controllers of the schools in the future were to be the local authorities, who were also the popularly elected rating authorities, collecting the education rate from the entire counties or boroughs under their jurisdiction. The so-called "managers" were managers in name only; and it is a great mistake that the name was ever given to them, since it created a great

deal of misapprehension ; as a matter of fact, they could not spend a single sixpence of public money without the leave of the local authority. After the Act had come into operation, it was my misfortune to become the "corresponding manager" of a certain village school. There was much correspondence, but very little management.

Though, however, it is difficult to see in what respects the Bill of 1902 was unjust to Nonconformists or to any other section of the community, there is no doubt that it gave mortal offence, and contributed more than any other single cause to the overthrow of 1906. It destroyed a Nonconformist ideal, towards which they had been working for many years. Ever since the Act of 1870 they—or at least the majority and more active of them—had sought to destroy the Voluntary schools, not because of their voluntary but of their denominational character, and they had aimed at establishing a universal system of undenominational schools, controlled by local School Boards elected *ad hoc*. The School Board was their idol, the Church school their *bête noire*. Now, all of a sudden, they saw their idol destroyed, and their *bête noire* comfortably quartered upon the rates ! There was a general howl of indignation, intensified by the not altogether unjustifiable feeling that the Government had been elected on the one issue of the war, and had no "mandate" to touch the schools at all. We may dismiss this view as irrelevant, on the ground that no Government can exist on a purely negative programme, and that the House of Commons is elected to deal with every issue as it arises. We may contend that the Nonconformist plan of elementary education was an impossible one, that it would have prevented the co-ordination of

schools and destroyed all progress; and we may be perfectly certain (as I am myself) that there can be no such thing as "undenominational Christianity," that the phrase is in itself a contradiction in terms, and that what they were really aiming at was the teaching of just that amount of Christian doctrine that was acceptable to themselves; yet the fact remains that a feeling of resentment, deep, bitter, permanent, was aroused, and will not for many years be extinguished; and our leaders having regard to past controversies—*e.g.* those which raged round the Acts of 1870 and 1897 and the abortive Bill of 1896—ought to have anticipated this more than they did. Do not let it be supposed, however, that I wish to suggest that Mr Balfour was solely or chiefly to blame. Far from it—churchmen, in the House and outside, must bear a large share of the responsibility. Convocation itself had urged the adoption of some such plan; we, in the House, had pressed on our leader our keen desire that the control of elementary education should be included in the new Bill. We were anxious to get the best terms we could for our schools out of a friendly Government while we had the chance. In the result we obtained less, in my opinion, than we were entitled to; but to the Nonconformists it appeared that the Church had captured the Government, and that the whole Bill was designed for the express purpose of endowing denominational schools.

I have entered upon this long digression because of the tremendous effect that the Bill had upon the fortunes of the party, and because these religious controversies occupied the greater part of the time during the rest of the session. The actual debate on the introduction was short and non-committal in

character, the reception accorded being generally favourable, but Dr Macnamara touched the spot when he said that the proposal to place the denominational schools on the rates would lead to a long and bitter controversy. The first reading was carried by a majority of 153, and we shortly afterwards adjourned for Easter.

Directly the recess was over, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach introduced his seventh, and, as it turned out, his last Budget. He had again to face an enormous deficit due to the continuation of the war, and although peace negotiations were actually proceeding, he framed his estimates so as to meet a further prolongation of hostilities, in addition to which he pointed out that the winding up of the war and the resettlement of the country would entail large expenditure. Following the course he had pursued in previous years, he proposed that part of the additional cost should be defrayed by loans and part by extra taxation. For the latter he proposed an additional penny on the income tax, raising it to 1s. 2d., an additional penny stamp on cheques (a proposal which was subsequently abandoned), and, most important of all, the revival of the registration duty of 1s. a quarter on imported corn, which had been retained for more than twenty years after the Repeal of the Corn Laws, but was got rid of in a fit of Cobdenite pedantry by Mr Lowe in 1869, whereby a large income was sacrificed (Sir M. Hicks-Beach's duty brought in over two millions) without the con-consumer being benefited in the slightest degree. Sir Michael, it need hardly be said, had no intentions of a protectionist character—no man, in fact, had fewer leanings towards protection; in a previous generation he would probably have been classed as a

“Peelite”—his object was, as it had been last year, to broaden the basis of taxation, while still imposing duties for revenue only ; but this first blow struck at the rigid and doctrinaire Cobdenism which had prevailed so long was received with rapturous delight by those members of the Unionist Party who had never bowed down before the idol of free imports ; and Sir Howard Vincent’s “hear, hears,” shouted in stentorian tones, were not a little embarrassing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. On the other hand, the Opposition began at once to talk about taxing the food of the people ; one could almost see the big and little loaves emerging from their pockets while Sir Michael was making his speech.

Not long before, Archbishop Temple had said that the Government were “not a very bold Government.” This description was hardly true now ; in the space of a fortnight they had proposed to abolish School Boards, to place Voluntary schools on the rates, and to put a tax on imported corn. No wonder the Opposition, the leaders of whom had lately been sniping at each other from rival “tabernacles,” came together again. They had at last got two excellent cries from their point of view, and in their newly found unity they made the most of them. The country responded to the indignation of the Opposition, and from this time, and not from the introduction of the Tariff question a year later, began that unbroken series of by-election disasters sustained by the Government during the rest of its career. Bury was the first, when a Conservative majority of 849 at the General Election was turned into a Radical majority of 414. Two months later—in July—an even greater transference of votes occurred in East Leeds, where a vacancy had occurred through the

elevation of Mr Jackson to the peerage. In the following month Mr Forster's majority in Sevenoaks fell from 4812 to 891! But we are anticipating.

Sir Michael's corn duties were debated at great length on the various stages of the Budget, and brought to the front a new member who has since gone far, and is still at the beginning only of his course, Mr Bonar Law. His speech on the report of the resolution imposing the duties was a really remarkable effort, which greatly pleased members on both sides of the House, and nobody more than Mr Balfour. He seemed to speak with the full practical knowledge of a man of business, but with the detached and theoretical method of a Scottish metaphysician. After denying that the duty was protective, but warning the House that the cry for protection might come again if working men employed in our great manufacturing industries found that they were losing their employment through unfair foreign competition, he proceeded to chaff unmercifully Mr Robson and other Opposition speakers, who stated that the laws of political economy were as immutable as the law of gravity, and at the same time that the price of bread would be raised by an amount far exceeding the actual amount of the duty. "He (Mr Robson) said that, as there were no small coins, a halfpenny would at least be added to the selling price of the loaf. That is the same honourable and learned member who in talking about the cost of production says that these things are governed by natural laws, which are as inevitable as the law of gravitation. What about natural laws now? Do they only apply when they support the arguments of the hon. gentlemen opposite? Do they cease to operate when they are against those arguments? Perhaps he thinks that a

baker is above these laws. That is an opinion which has been held at different periods in the history of the world. It was held at the time of the French Revolution ; and to some purpose, for in Paris they strung up a baker about every second day, in order to lower the price of bread." Then turning again to Mr Robson, he added, "The hon. member said the additional charge is half a farthing, but the baker will charge a halfpenny. This means an additional profit on what bakers are making now of fully 20 per cent. If that was possible, should we not all become bakers?" Members were amused, but also greatly interested ; and from that day Mr Bonar Law had the ear of the House, and is not likely to lose it. Sir Henry Fowler, who followed with a strenuous speech against the duty, warmly congratulated Mr Bonar Law, and after a long debate, which was only the first of several on the same subject, the resolution was carried by a large majority. Sir Michael subsequently modified his Budget in some particulars owing to the termination of hostilities in South Africa, but the Corn Tax remained, with the corresponding duties on flour.

Meanwhile the debates on the new Rules had been concluded, and we entered on the second reading of the Education Bill. Just before this, however, a discussion arose on a motion for adjournment on what was known as the Cartwright Case, which caused a good deal of excitement. Mr Cartwright had been editor of the *South African News*, the pro-Boer organ at Cape Town, and had published a gross libel on Lord Kitchener, charging him with having wired secret orders to the troops to take no prisoners in a certain engagement. For this he had been imprisoned for a year, and had served his time,

and he now wished to come to England, but was prevented by the military authorities in Cape Colony, where martial law prevailed for the present. Questions were asked in the House, and Lord Stanley gave the not very diplomatic reply that he was refused leave to go, because "it was inadvisable to increase the number of people in this country who disseminated anti-British propaganda." On this Mr Morley moved the adjournment. The chief speakers were Mr Balfour and Mr Brodrick on the Government side, and Sir W. Harcourt, who was full of fury, on the Opposition. The debate, however, revealed great difference of opinion among Unionists, and the best of friends fell out. The Hooligans were sadly divided, Mr Winston Churchill vigorously attacking Lord Percy, who supported the Government. Later on, Mr Ian Malcolm literally went for Mr Balfour, for whom he usually professed the most intense admiration—indeed at a later date when the Fiscal question had become acute, he described himself as a "pure Balfourite," being probably the only one of the class known for a certainty to exist. His Balfourism was by no means pure now. The Government triumphed in the lobby, if not in the debate.

The debate on the second reading of the Education Bill began on May 5, and lasted four days. The speeches were portentously long, and the number of members who wanted to speak immense, so that whenever one member sat down, having concluded his remarks, a whole covey of would-be orators rose from each side of the House all anxious to catch the Speaker's eye, the successful candidate then proceeding by the length of his speech to take care that the coveys did not rise again for some time to come.

Many were the members who wished that Major Rasch had succeeded in passing his Duration of Speeches Bill. For my part, I rose in my place eleven times before I could fire off a speech, for which I had hastily prepared an equal number of *impromptu exordia* to rebut the statements of the previous speaker, a well-known device calculated to make the whole speech appear extempore. Much of the debate was dull, but it produced two memorable speeches—Lord Hugh Cecil's and Mr Dillon's.

Lord Hugh dealt with the Bill as a whole, but particularly with the religious question. After disclaiming any intention of disparaging the religious teaching given in Board schools, much of which, he said, was very reverential and might even be "advanced" in character, he proceeded in a striking passage to draw the distinction between the Board schools and denominational schools as follows:—"It has been said allegorically that a Board school is a school with only one door; the child goes in and learns a great deal that is valuable, and goes out again into the street. A Church school, a Wesleyan school, a Roman Catholic school are schools with two doors; and the other door leads on into the church or chapel and brings the child into contact with, and under the influence of, this or that denomination." He then proceeded to urge the importance of attaching children to a denomination, in view of the spread of atheism and indifferentism, and he looked for an amicable settlement in this with the Nonconformists, whom he described as the "natural allies" of the Church. He concluded with a magnificent peroration, in which he contrasted "Christian Imperialism" with "material Imperialism," the aim of the former being to carry Christian

civilisation all over the globe, while the latter contented itself with attending to the personal comfort and well-being of the subject; and he ended by saying that his desire was "to make national education fulfil its noblest purpose, to make the schools of the country not only schools where people will learn to be successful, to make wealth rapidly, to be learned, and to cultivate their intellect, but schools where they will also learn to serve the right with a knowledge of the Supreme Power that lies beyond the senses." On the whole, it was the most eloquent speech I ever heard in the House. Possibly, however, it did more harm than good to the cause of Church education. The "two doors" passage was frequently quoted by the enemy to show that we aimed at making our schools denominational forcing-houses, where the children of Nonconformists would be "proselytised." Of course, Lord Hugh did not mean this; he invited Nonconformists to frankly adopt the denominational system in their schools, and use them as the Church and Roman Catholics did for the purpose of "attaching" their children, and to build new schools for this purpose. The Nonconformist Party preferred, however, to adhere to the so-called "unsectarian" principle, on the absurdity of which they were well criticised by Mr Dillon. I do not admire Mr Dillon's oratory as a rule, but his speech on the present occasion was an exception. "It was said," he exclaimed, "that there was no desire on the part of the Nonconformists to banish Christian teaching from the schools. But is not Christian teaching sectarian? Of course it is. Do you mean to tell me that the Divinity of our Lord is not one of the greatest dogmas? It lies at the root of our whole religion. The position of

honourable members seems to be that nothing is dogma which they believe, but everything is dogma which we believe and they do not. Why do they speak of Bible teaching? Why not Shakespeare or the Dialogues of Plato, or any other great book which contains moral truth? Do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible? Do you believe in the sacred character of the Bible? Is not that dogma? Is it not a dogma to say that the Bible is a sacred book?" Then looking round at the serried ranks of political Nonconformists sitting above the gangway —the Perks, George Whites, Huttons, and the rest—he added to their very obvious discomfiture: "A more illogical or preposterous position was never taken up by a rational people. If you are logical, the moment you break with the principle of sectarian teaching you must banish Christianity, and you must banish the Bible, or else you must bring the Bible in as it was brought in by some of the foreign schools in the days of the French Revolution, as a beautiful poem to be placed beside the poems of Shakespeare and others."

There may be an answer to this, but I have never heard it. Certainly it was not given in the debate.

Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr Balfour wound up the discussion as usual, and the second reading was carried by no less than 237, the Government being reinforced by the Nationalists. Coming out of the lobby I met Dr Macnamara, who had voted against it, and I remarked that the majority was good enough. "Yes," he replied, "but the 1896 Bill was read a second time with an even larger majority, and what happened to it?" Happily, the same fate was not in store for the present measure.

The debate on the Education Bill practically con-

cluded the business before Whitsuntide, with the exception of a short discussion on a matter that was destined to play a large part in the politics of the future—the Taff Vale decision. By that judgment the House of Lords, sitting as the final Court of Appeal, had decided that Trades Unions could be sued, and their funds be rendered liable for the illegal acts of their officials in trade disputes, whereby it was contended they were placed in a worse position than Parliament had intended when the existing Acts were passed, and than that in which they had generally been supposed to be. No doubt it was perfectly true that the claim of the Unions to be put above the law, so to speak, was an illogical one, and there was no valid reason why they should be granted such a privilege; but it was felt by their leaders that something of great value had been taken from them by the House of Lords, and they were very bitter about it, and very much in earnest in their determination to regain it. I do not think that the Government or the Unionist Party as a whole sufficiently realised this determination, while they certainly over-estimated the probable evil effects of reversing the Lords' decision. After all, for thirty years it had been generally held that the Unions could not be sued in their corporate capacity, and no particular harm had resulted, and the decision came rather as a surprise both to employers and employed. On May 14, a Liberal member, Mr Beaumont, moved a resolution on the subject, which was seconded by Mr Bell, M.P. for Derby, an ex-railway servant and secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. To this Mr Renshaw moved an amendment which was supported by the Government generally, which practically amounted to a refusal to consider the

question at present. Mr Renshaw's amendment was carried, but by 29 votes only, a good many Unionists voting in the minority.

The Whitsuntide holidays were remarkable only for a passage in Mr Chamberlain's annual address to the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association, in which he indicated very clearly his desire to establish preferential trade relations with the Colonies, and spoke of the necessity of putting aside "economic pedantry" and "old world shibboleths" for this purpose. These remarks excited some comment, but very little compared with that which was produced a year later. This speech and similar speeches in previous years, to some of which I have already alluded, must be borne in mind when we are told that the Preferential Policy was suddenly sprung on the country in 1903.

A few days after the reassembling of Parliament came the joyous news that on June 1—a glorious day in British history—the Treaty of Vereeniging had been signed, and the long Boer War concluded. The following day—a Monday—the announcement was made by Mr Balfour in a crowded house. There was no exultation but a general feeling of relief, the country being, in the slang expression of the time, "fed up with" the war. We all hoped for a permanent peace now, and a settlement of the new Colonies under real British supremacy; but many members doubted whether the peace negotiations had not been unduly accelerated, it being common knowledge that the Boers were *in extremis*, and could not have resisted more than a few weeks longer. As it was, they were able to treat as equals, even though they gave up their nominal independence; and there are in the Transvaal to-day many

Boers who thoroughly believe that we made terms because we were at the end of our tether! Generosity never pays with that people.

Mr Balfour was much pressed to allow the adjournment of the House in order to celebrate the occasion. This he refused to do, and we proceeded at once to the Committee stage of the Education Bill. Now began the most prolonged and strenuous fight that had taken place in the House since the Home Rule debates nine years before. The Opposition had quite shaken off their lethargy, and were full of fire and fury. Most of the discussion turned on the management of the Voluntary schools, which was debated *ad nauseam*. I can only refer to one or two of the leading incidents.

The Opposition first attempted to limit the Bill to Secondary Education. The great weight of educational authority was, however, against this proposal, which was easily defeated. We then proceeded to discuss the Secondary Education part of the Bill at great length, Mr Balfour showing a most conciliatory spirit, and by accepting several amendments strengthening the clauses considerably. At this stage our progress was interrupted by two events of great importance—the serious illness of the King and the consequent postponement of the Coronation, and the resignation of Lord Salisbury. With regard to the former, I need only say that no section of His Majesty's subjects grieved more over the unexpected illness which had prostrated the King at this moment, or rejoiced more heartily over his rapid recovery, than His Majesty's faithful Commons. Lord Salisbury's retirement was a matter of the deepest importance to the Unionist Party. The great Conservative leader who had

rescued the party from the depths into which it had been plunged after the electoral cataclysm of 1880 and the death of Lord Beaconsfield—who by a judicious alliance with the Liberal Unionists loyally kept on both sides, had built up and established the Unionist Party; who had been three times Prime Minister; who as Foreign Secretary for many years had made England respected abroad even if she were not loved, had solved endless foreign complications, and had practically kept the world at bay during the South African War, when our enemies were many and our sympathisers confined almost entirely to the English-speaking race; who though he had no popular gifts, such as were possessed by such leaders as Mr Gladstone or Mr Chamberlain, was yet looked up to with a feeling of confidence by thousands of people who had never seen him; who was, in a word, a great statesman and a great and devoted churchman—passed away from the political stage. Such men are not easily replaced, and their withdrawal, though the effects may not be immediately observed, profoundly affects the life of a party; and in estimating the various causes of our subsequent defeat, we must not omit the removal of this great figure.

Lord Salisbury's retirement was not unexpected—his health had not been of the best for many years, and he had well earned a period of retirement and repose. The King immediately sent for Mr Balfour, who undertook the duties of Prime Minister. The next day a party meeting was held at the Foreign Office. Mr Balfour presided, and after paying a tribute to Lord Salisbury, announced that he had undertaken the onerous duties imposed upon him, after having first of all consulted and received assur-

ance of support from the two Liberal Unionist leaders, the Duke of Devonshire and Mr Chamberlain. The latter was not present, having been laid up for a few days by a cab accident, but Mr Austen Chamberlain confirmed Mr Balfour's statement as to his father's loyal co-operation. At the same meeting Mr Balfour announced that Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had decided to follow Lord Salisbury into retirement—a great loss to the party. Lord James, Lord Cadogan, Sir John Gorst, Mr Jesse Collings, and one or two other Ministers, also retired, causing another reconstruction of the Ministry, which proceeded on the familiar lines. There were some promotions and some new appointments, the choice being limited very much to one section of the party. Mr Ritchie, the ever-fortunate, succeeded Sir M. Hicks-Beach as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to be succeeded in turn at the Home Office by Mr Akers Douglas, whose place at the Office of Works was taken by Lord Windsor. Lord Londonderry accepted the exceedingly important post of Minister of Education, recently created, while the Vice-Presidency of the Committee of Council having disappeared with the person of Sir John Gorst, Sir William Anson, the accomplished Warden of All Souls' College, Oxford, undertook to represent the Department in the House of Commons as Parliamentary Secretary. Two appointments which were generally approved were those of Mr Austen Chamberlain to the Post Office, with Cabinet rank, and Lord Percy to the Under-Secretaryship for India. But the most interesting by far was that of Mr Bonar Law, who became Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, thus obtaining admission to the charmed ranks of the Ministry within two years

of his first election to the House, the fitting reward of rare ability. Considerable changes were made in the Whips' room, the position of Chief Whip which he had long held being vacated by Sir William Walrond, who undertook the arduous duties of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. His place was filled, contrary to expectations, by Sir Alexander Acland-Hood, who had been an assistant Whip for a short time only. The party had generally supposed that either Mr Hayes Fisher or Mr Ailwyn Fellowes would occupy this position, both of whom, and especially the former, were well qualified. Mr Hayes Fisher, however, was not forgotten, and his long services and industry were rewarded by promotion to the Financial Secretaryship of the Treasury vacated by Mr A. Chamberlain. Mr H. W. Forster, whose 5000 majority at Sevenoaks at the last election made his seat appear safer than it proved to be, entered the Whips' room as a Junior Lord of the Treasury. Thus was the Ministry reconstructed, if not materially strengthened, under Mr Balfour.

In the meantime, we had been discussing the Education Bill almost *de die in diem*. A vigorous controversy arose as to whether in new secondary schools built by the local authorities denominational teaching should be permitted, or they should be confined to the tenets of Cowper-Templeism. The Government somewhat illogically supported the latter plan, thus re-establishing in secondary schools a principle which it was thought they held in discredit when applied to primary schools. It is true that the churchmen in the House differed on the question—and only 29 supported Lord Hugh Cecil in the lobby when he divided

against the Government. We then reached the clause which made the undertaking of the control of elementary education optional on the part of the local councils. Its omission was moved by Mr Henry Hobhouse, a great authority on local government and on education, and the Government made it an open question. The result was that it was thrown out by a huge majority, though Mr Austen Chamberlain and some other Ministers voted in favour of its retention. This result, as abolishing School Boards and giving the Voluntary schools rate-aid in all cases, redoubled the opposition of the Nonconformists to the Bill. Battle was now fairly joined on the so-called religious difficulty in elementary schools. The Opposition tried hard to get the whole question postponed to the autumn session, which, as being obviously inevitable, it had been decided to hold some time before; but Mr Balfour, who conducted the Government case throughout these debates with a skill and determination which caused universal admiration, would not hear of this proposal. As a result, we discussed for days the proportions of foundation and representative managers on the committees of Voluntary schools, whether they were to be four to two, or three to three, or two to four, with much iteration and weariness of soul—the heat both inside and outside the House being intense—generally, however, securing large majorities through the support of the Irish Nationalists, who, however, occasionally deserted us and sometimes even attacked; as when Mr Dillon, on July 30, moved an amendment excluding what were called single school districts from the operation of the clause. On this our majority fell to 41, some Unionists also straying into the wrong lobby. After this we did

better, and by sheer perseverance added Clause 6, the Management Clause, which Mr Balfour had determined to pass before the adjournment, to the Bill. Two days later we witnessed the solemn Coronation Service in Westminster Abbey—so rapid had the King's recovery been—and then dispersed to meet again in October.

Meanwhile an event of great moment was occurring, though little heed was paid to it at the time. The Colonial Premiers, who had come over for the Coronation, were meeting in Imperial Conference, presided over by Mr Chamberlain, and were formulating those resolutions on Preferential Trade which first brought the question of Tariff Reform before the country. It was a commonplace on the Opposition side afterwards that these resolutions were suggested or even dictated to the Premiers by the masterful personality of the Colonial Secretary, and that there was no real Colonial offer. How untrue this theory was they have subsequently discovered.

The Parliamentary holiday was no holiday for the Opposition. They ceaselessly agitated the country on the Education question, and not without success. We retaliated later on, but, as usual, allowed them to have the first innings, which is of greater importance in politics than it often is in cricket. It is always so with Conservatives and with churchmen.

When we reassembled, on October 16, we settled down at once to what was called the Maintenance Clause of the Bill, the clause whereby the local authorities were bound to maintain and keep efficient all public elementary schools (including, of course, the Voluntary schools) in their areas. A

remarkable change now came about in the character of the discussion, and the view taken of the measure. So far, it had been violently opposed by the Nonconformist Party, but accepted, as being on the whole a fair settlement, by churchmen. Now Mr Balfour began to make a series of concessions which seriously alarmed the Church, while not in the least appeasing her opponents. Such were the removal of tests for assistant and pupil teachers (perfectly proper in my judgment), and the refusal to allow the managers of Voluntary schools to charge small non-structural repairs due to everyday use to the local authorities. The climax was reached on the introduction of the well-known Kenyon-Slaney Clause, which caused what at first looked like a serious revolt on the part of churchmen. This clause, which placed the control of religious instruction in the hands of the whole body of the managers of Voluntary schools—not in the hands of the foundation managers only—was designed to check the alleged extravagances of a few Ritualistic clergymen, and appeared on the order paper in the name of Colonel Kenyon-Slaney, who thereby became famous throughout the land as a Protestant champion and Ritualist-slayer; but it was well known that the real authors of it were the Government, and that he was moving it at their request. A lively debate ensued. Churchmen of all shades, High and Low, Lord Hugh Cecil, Mr Vicary Gibbs, Sir John Kennaway, and Mr Cripps, spoke strongly against it, pointing out that it constituted a grave affront to the clergy, and was contrary to the original understanding on which the Bill was based, viz., that while the Church gave up the control of secular education in Church schools to the local authorities altogether, she was to retain control of

the religious instruction—whereas now the representative managers, many of whom would not be churchmen at all, would have a voice in it. A clergyman indeed might be shut out from the church school in his own parish altogether by the action of the managers. Mr Balfour announced that the Government would be neutral in the matter, and would put no pressure on their supporters to vote one way or the other, but he proceeded to make a strong speech in favour of the clause, with the result that it was carried by a large majority, the Opposition of course supporting it. Personally, I spoke and voted against it, for though I did not anticipate all the evil expected by some of my friends, I regarded it as a most unnecessary concession to prejudice, and felt that it would be greatly resented by the clergy; which indeed it was, and when we went to the country we discovered that the Education Act, hated as it was by the Noncomformists, had few friends among churchmen, clerical or lay, and this result must largely be attributed to the Kenyon-Slaney Clause.

The guillotine now finished off the remainder of the Committee stage, but some further points were discussed on Report. Chief among them was a new clause proposed by Lord Hugh Cecil, to provide facilities for separate religious instruction in accordance with the wishes of the parents in all elementary schools, provided or non-provided alike, which, however, the Opposition would not accept, and Mr Balfour opposed, though he approved of the principle. Probably the country was not ripe for this solution, which, however, I am convinced must be ultimately accepted. In no other way can the religious difficulty in elementary schools be settled.

The Bill came back to us from the Lords with several amendments—the most notable being that the managers of Voluntary schools were relieved of the burden of non-structural repairs, which had been placed upon them by the Lower House. This of course involved an additional charge on the rates, which the Lords had constitutionally no power to impose; they therefore adopted the extraordinary course of adding to the amendment the words, "This obligation on the local authority shall throw no additional charge on any public fund," which was absolutely meaningless and absurd. Mr Balfour adopted the only possible course, by allowing these words to be omitted in the Commons, thus alleviating the financial pressure on the Voluntary schools, and causing much indignation on the Opposition benches. So at length on December 18 we finished. It had been the longest session since 1893, and was the most momentous in the history of the Unionist Government. Whatever we may think of the Education Bill, everybody acknowledged the skill with which Mr Balfour had piloted it through, and I can only reiterate my opinion that the Bill itself was just, and inflicted no real hardship on the Nonconformists. Whether, however, churchmen were wise to ask for rate-aid, or the Government to grant it, is another matter. Personally, I think that we should have done better if we had adhered to the earlier view expressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who died with tragic suddenness during these debates, and had refused to put the schools on the slippery slope of the rates. The decision, however, was taken and the Act was passed, and is likely to stand until the Nonconformists arrive at a juster appreciation of the feelings of churchmen.

Some day we may come to a better and more equitable settlement, but it will be on the lines laid down by Lord Hugh Cecil rather than on those expressed by Dr Clifford and the leaders of political Nonconformity.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SESSION OF 1903 AND THE GREAT FISCAL QUESTION

THE opening of Parliament, after a very short holiday, took place on February 17, and it soon became clear that the popularity of the Government had suffered greatly in the past few months. In the country they had lost, and lost badly, another by-election at Newmarket, while, in the House, signs of dissatisfaction were everywhere apparent. They had succeeded in involving themselves in a trumpery quarrel with Venezuela, where they appeared to be pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for Germany, much to the disgust of people of all politics and creeds. The idea was that "Potsdam" influence was a controlling force in the Cabinet, as shown, not only in the Venezuelan incident, but also in a proposal that the British Post Office should assist a German syndicate which had obtained a concession from the Sultan of Turkey, over whom, largely in consequence of British diplomatic blunders, German influence was now supreme, to construct a railway to the Persian Gulf, by undertaking that the Indian Mail should go by that route. The Government succeeded in extricating themselves from both of these "messes," as Lord Cranborne, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs quite candidly

called the Venezuelan business ; but it was generally thought that they had been forced out of an undesirable position by public opinion, without which they were quite prepared to carry out the wishes of the Kaiser.

It is curious to reflect, in this connection, how exceedingly unpopular Germany had become in recent years in England. Up to quite lately, goodwill towards Germany, or even an alliance, had been advocated by politicians of all calibres, ranging from Mr Chamberlain to Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett. Thanks largely, however, to the grossly unfair attitude of the German Press during the war, which was evidently countenanced by Prince Bülow and the Government, and still more to the ever-increasing competition of German trade and shipping, which, thanks to a wise system of scientific tariffs had made immense strides in recent years, Germany had lately become the *bête noire* of the British people. Even Radicals shared in this feeling, or affected to ; and Mr Haldane and Sir Charles Dilke addressed an important conference the day before the opening of Parliament, at which resolutions were passed urging the establishment of a naval base on the east coast, in view of the continual increase in the German navy.

Venezuela, however, and the supposed pro-German leanings of Ministers, by no means exhausted the causes of dissatisfaction with the Government. The Radicals and political Nonconformists were conducting a violent crusade against the Education Act, and Dr Clifford was organising the so-called "passive resisters," or "active anarchists," as some persons called them, not inaccurately, since, if it became the practice of people to refuse to obey any law of which they

disapproved, a state of anarchy would very soon supervene. It was in army matters, however, that the greatest amount of dissatisfaction existed. I have mentioned the formation of the army group of Unionist members, who opposed Mr Brodrick's Army Corps Scheme two years before. These gentlemen had now formed themselves into a regular cove, and incessantly attacked the Government during the earlier part of the session with increasing virulence. They had, no doubt, some good arguments on their side. They distrusted the practicability of the Brodrick plan, and objected to its expense, holding that we were spending too much on the Army and not enough on the Navy; for the "blue water school," which has since gone to such lengths, was just beginning to make its influence felt. But these considerations can hardly explain the apparent animus with which the attack was habitually conducted, and it was unkindly suggested in the lobby that some of the army group were disgusted at the manner in which the Government had been reconstructed, and at their own non-inclusion in its ranks. It is hard to believe, however, that men like Mr Ernest Beckett, Sir John Dickson Poynder, Major Seely, and Mr Winston Churchill could have been actuated by such motives.

The principal debate on the Address took place on an amendment moved by Mr Ernest Beckett, condemning the Army Corps Scheme. He made a great speech, in which he said that the ways of the War Office under the present War Minister were "mess, muddle, and make-believe," a phrase which was subsequently quoted by the Radicals at every by-election, and which, as a description of the usual methods of the Office, quite independently of any

particular Minister, is perfectly true, as every holder of the King's Commission knows. Of course, he was rapturously applauded by the Opposition, as was his seconder, also a Unionist, Major Seely. Mr Brodrick defended himself vigorously—he was always an effective Parliamentary debater, especially when he had his back to the wall—but, in the course of his speech, made the unfortunate remark that Lord Grenfell would assume command of the Fourth Army Corps, which had not yet been formed, on April 1. The next day, Mr Winston Churchill greatly amused the House by the following passage:—“The Rt. Hon. Gentleman had said that, up to midnight on March 31, Lord Grenfell would have no army corps to command; that there was only himself—although, perhaps, he was a host in himself, or something of that sort. That was perfectly true. He should look forward with interest to that date, because April 1 would witness a most interesting event—the birth of an army corps. Some people thought that when General Grenfell arrived at Colchester at the head of a large staff he would be welcomed by the Mayor and Corporation, and that on every road converging on the town long lines of horsemen and artillery would be marching.” After then predicting that absolutely nothing would happen (which prophecy came true), he added, “The Rt. Hon. Gentleman would wake up in the morning, and lo! there would only be three army corps; but when he came home in the evening he would have established the fourth by a mental process and a scratch of the pen.” He summed up the scheme as a “humbug and a sham.” Many other Unionist members spoke on both sides, and the debate appeared to be largely a Unionist family quarrel.

Mr Balfour wound up in a very able speech, but when the division was taken it was found that no less than 18 Unionists had voted against the Government, and if there had been a ballot instead of open voting, I believe the Government would have been defeated. As it was, the debate did Ministers a great deal of harm in the country.

The attack was renewed on March 10, when, after Mr Brodrick had made his explanatory statement on the Army estimates, Mr Ivor Guest moved to reduce the number of men on the normal establishment by 27,000, which roughly represented the increase which had taken place since 1897. Mr Ivor Guest was another of the Adullamites who were shortly to follow the lead of Mr Winston Churchill into all manner of devious pathways, and he, like Mr Beckett, was supported by a large number of Unionists and by the full force of the Opposition. Next, Mr Brodrick was violently assailed by Mr Bromley Davenport, because Colonel Kinloch, who had commanded a battalion of Grenadier Guards in which there had seemed to be a lack of discipline, especially among the junior officers, had been placed on half-pay by the Commander-in-Chief. Mr Bromley Davenport was always a very good speaker, and had on several occasions defended Lord Penrhyn with rare ability in debates on the strike at the Bethesda quarries. He made an able speech now in defence of Colonel Kinloch; but, as the former was his father-in-law and the latter his brother-in-law, it was remarked that he appeared to regard the House of Commons as being a place chiefly for the defence of his relations! Lord Hugh Cecil, very unfortunately, I thought, joined in this attack, as did other Unionists, but Mr Brodrick refused to give way an inch;

declared that tremendous social pressure had been brought to bear on him to hush up the scandal in the Guards, to which, however, he refused to submit, and stoutly maintained, amid constant interruption, that the Commander-in-Chief must have power to dismiss officers from important commands in cases where a court-martial would be quite inapplicable. Mr Winston Churchill, of course, joined in the now popular pastime of Brodrick-baiting ; but the motion was lost by a considerable majority—and I think the verdict will be that Mr Brodrick deserved well of the country and of the Army by the firm stand he made in this case, as he had previously done in that of General Colvile.

A week later we had yet another debate, Mr Vicary Gibbs leading this time. He moved a reduction of 3000 men, in order to call attention to the want of physique of many of the recruits. His speech was really excellent and moderate in tone, which is more than can be said of that of Mr Beckett, who supported him. Then Mr Arthur Elliott arose, and, in one of the best speeches I ever heard, protested against this everlasting attack on Mr Brodrick and the Government by a group of members calling themselves Unionists. Many members, indeed, who did not altogether approve of Mr Brodrick's proposals were getting heartily sick of these repeated criticisms coming from the same quarter, and were wondering what right Messrs Beckett, Churchill, Seely, Guest and Co. had to pose as the sole great authorities on the Army. It is rather remarkable that not one of them sits on the Unionist side now, nor could I honestly say that the party is worse off in consequence.

Meanwhile the Government had been faring badly

in the country. A vacancy occurred at Woolwich, owing to the appointment of Lord Charles Beresford—who was constantly oscillating between various naval commands and equally various seats in the House—to the command of the Mediterranean Fleet. At the General Election Lord Charles had been returned with a majority of 2805. Now Mr Will Crooks, the Labour candidate, defeated Mr Geoffrey Drage, celebrated as the member who had turned Sir W. Harcourt out of Derby in 1895, by no less than 3229 votes! I shall never forget the shout of triumph raised by the Opposition one dull night in March when the figures arrived. It showed, indeed, an extraordinary turnover; but, as a matter of fact, the growth of the Labour movement, which was just beginning now, and was largely due to the Taff Vale decision and the *non possumus* attitude of the Government on the subject, had most to do with it. If Woolwich, however, was a Labour victory, the Rye election which shortly followed was a triumph for Liberalism. The Rye division was next door to mine, and I had long regarded it as one of the safest seats in the country. It had returned Colonel Brookfield by steadily increasing majorities for many years, and in 1900 he had defeated Dr Hutchinson by no less than 2489 votes. Now the Doctor, who soon became quite a personality in the House by reason of his strange speeches, wherein conscious and unconscious humour were quaintly mingled, won by 534. The Conservative Central Office must really be held largely responsible for this result, as, though it was known weeks before that Colonel Brookfield was going to resign, no steps had been taken to secure a successor, with the result that a gentleman was chosen at the last moment who, however estimable

he may otherwise be, was certainly not a suitable candidate for that seat. It is very characteristic of the way our party was managed at the time that this same gentleman, whose sole political record was that he had lost two Conservative seats (he had lost Hastings at the General Election) was shortly afterwards made a baronet, and given a safe seat at the next election! That Rye could be lost in this way caused me furiously to think, and from that time I began to wonder whether Tonbridge could be held.

A great gloom fell on the party in the House, which was not much relieved by the fact that we held the Chertsey Division a few weeks later by a reduced majority. I remember well a conversation I had with a prominent member of the Government, who remarked that if things went on as they were, the next General Election would be a *débâcle*, and our party would be almost annihilated. This, be it noted, was some months before Mr Chamberlain's celebrated fiscal pronouncement, and the split in our ranks.

Shortly before Easter, Mr Chamberlain returned from his visit to South Africa, and had a great reception in the House. He had a very satisfactory account to give of the way in which the two new Colonies were settling down. The only difficulty in the way appeared to be the shortage of native labour, which had seriously handicapped the restarting of the mines. Sir W. Harcourt at once seized the opportunity of making one of his well-known attacks on the mine-owners; and every proposal put forward to augment the supply of labour on which, not only the mines, but the whole of South Africa, depended, was opposed by the Liberal Party, whether

it was to take more stringent steps to "induce" the natives to work, or to import other natives from Central Africa (which plan Mr Chamberlain favoured), or the importation of Asiatics, to which he was clearly opposed.

Following on this debate, Mr Wyndham introduced his much-expected Irish Land Purchase Bill. Bills on this subject had been brought in the two previous sessions, but had never made any progress. It was not to be expected that they would, for the landlord and tenant parties in Ireland had been in sharp antagonism on the subject, the former demanding a voluntary, the latter a compulsory scheme. Now for the first time in history they had come together in a remarkable way. They were both willing to accept a voluntary scheme, provided the British taxpayer enabled them to bridge over their differences by a handsome money gift. The Bill was based on the report of a conference, at which four landlords, Lord Dunraven, Lord Mayo, Colonel Poé, and Colonel Everard, met four Nationalists, Messrs J. Redmond, W. O'Brien, T. Harrington, and T. W. Russell (if the latter may be described as a Nationalist, which is probably a more correct classification than he would have made of himself). The action of these landlords and of some others who had acted with them, including Captain Shaw-Taylor and Mr George Taaffe, was indeed most statesman-like; seeing that there was a chance of coming to terms with the enemy when they were in the way with him, and while they had a sympathetic Chief Secretary who would probably open the British purse-strings, they seized the chance, notwithstanding the fact that the old-fashioned Landlords' Convention had refused to have anything to do with such a conference. Mr

Wyndham's speech was a great success, and so was the Bill, which acted as a sort of *eirenicon* in Irish politics. Practically it came to this, that landlords might sell their estates to their tenants by agreement, taking as the basis of the sale the so-called second term rents, the British Government, by an extensive use of credit, paying the landlords in cash, and recouping itself by means of annual instalments for a term of years from the tenants ;—but inasmuch as there was always likely to be a difference between the maximum which the tenants were prepared to pay, and the minimum which the landlords would accept, the British taxpayer obligingly stepped in and bridged over this difference by a free grant of 12 millions. There was a good deal of feeling against this free grant on the Unionist benches, especially among agricultural members, who did not quite see why so great a boon should be confined to Irish farmers ; while many members feared, probably with good reason, that a dangerous position might arise in the future if a strike against the payment of the instalments should take place when every Irish farmer was, to all intents and purposes, a tenant of the British Government. The general view, however, was that the opportunity which seemed to present itself of making a final settlement of the Irish land question was one not to be missed, and that the gift of 12 millions must be regarded as some compensation to Ireland on the part of the Imperial Government for the colossal error of the establishment of dual ownership by Mr Gladstone's Ministry in 1881. The Bill was discussed at great length but in a friendly spirit, during the session, and became law, Mr Wyndham greatly adding to his reputation by the Parliamentary ability he displayed in handling it.

Just before the Easter adjournment an event occurred which caused general sympathy in the House. Of all the men who had obtained office in the Unionist administrations, nobody had earned his promotion better than Mr Hayes Fisher. Unlike some of his colleagues, and, according to the old saying, unlike most Knights of the Garter, he had attained to his position by merit alone, by Parliamentary application and ability. As I have already pointed out, he had been promoted at the reconstruction which followed Lord Salisbury's retirement from a Junior Lordship of the Treasury to the important post of Financial Secretary, and though this was not exactly the office which his friends had fancied for him (we had rather hoped that he would be appointed Chief Whip, for which he was specially qualified), there was every prospect of his making a success where he was. Unfortunately, seven years before, he had become a director of a company called the Telescriptor Syndicate, which came to grief, and was now wound up compulsorily. The case was heard before Mr Justice Buckley, who had lately earned great kudos by his action in the Whittaker Wright case, whereby that accomplished exploiter of other people's money was brought to justice after that the Attorney-General had refused to prosecute him, believing that there was little chance of obtaining a conviction. Mr Justice Buckley made some very scathing remarks about the directors of the Telescriptor Syndicate, which appeared to be most uncalled for as applied to some of them, including Mr Hayes Fisher. By no possible means could Mr Fisher be held to have been guilty of any dishonourable action; he had, in fact, taken care that the creditors were all paid in

full out of his own pocket, and was himself a victim of the fraud. Some of the newspapers, however, took up the case, and he felt that the only course open to him was to resign, which he did in a speech full of dignity and pathos. His colleagues in the Ministry did nothing to help him, but simply let him go, which seemed rather hard on the part of a Government which openly proclaimed that it was quite proper that its members should hold directorships, with all their attendant risks. In this way was interrupted, but not, it is hoped, by any means ended, a most promising official career.

Shortly afterwards Mr Fisher's place was filled by the appointment of Mr Arthur Elliott, an able speaker and writer, whose chief qualification for a Financial Office was, however, that he was editor of the *Edinburgh Review*.

Another event which caused genuine sorrow on both sides of the House was the sudden death of Mr Hanbury, the Minister for Agriculture. Mr Hanbury had never been a *persona grata* with the ruling section of the Unionist Party, on account of his great independence of character—if he had been, he would have received higher office than the Presidency of the Board of Agriculture. Since he had occupied that position he had made a great success of it; he had popularised the office, and made it a living thing among the farmers, and his death was keenly felt by the whole agricultural community. It was, moreover, a great loss to the party, as he had proved himself a capable administrator in office and a stern unbending critic, especially of the Estimates, in Opposition. He died on April 28, of pneumonia, after three days' illness, and the same day graceful references to his life and work were made in the

House by Mr Balfour and others; after which we proceeded to the second reading debate of the London Education Bill, which had been introduced three weeks before by Sir William Anson.

This unfortunate measure pleased nobody. It pretended to follow last year's Act, but, as a matter of fact, the London Education Authority was to be so constituted that the London County Council would be in a permanent minority upon it, their representatives being entirely swamped by those of the recently instituted Borough Councils, which always enjoyed the special patronage of their creators, while the L.C.C. was invariably treated as a wicked step-child, which treatment it perhaps deserved. This arrangement displeased many members on both sides, while others asked that the Borough Councils should be the authorities, each in its own area, and others, again, for the retention in London of an *ad hoc* authority. The second reading was carried after an animated debate, and the Government then proceeded to perform a most extraordinary series of antics in Committee, whereby they covered both their Bill and themselves with ridicule. In order to give the County Council a majority, Sir William Anson proposed an amendment reducing the number of Borough Council members by grouping the councils together, so that each borough would be represented by a vulgar fraction of a member. This was laughed out of the House, and Mr Balfour had to come to the rescue, and cut the knot by dispensing with the Borough Council representatives altogether, thus putting the London Authority into line with the other authorities throughout the country. The rest of the Committee stage was equally inglorious, and seemed to show a lamentable want of grip and

purpose on the part of the members of the Government responsible for the measure. The Bill finally became law in a greatly amended form.

I have hurried on to describe the conclusion of this measure, thereby anticipating the Budget, because the latter led up directly to the great Fiscal controversy, which was to occupy the attention of the House and the country for the rest of this Parliament, and probably far beyond it. Mr Ritchie introduced his one and only Budget on April 23, and the House was packed largely with members curious to see how he could acquit himself. His speech was certainly a success, his task being, in some respects, an easy one, as for the first time since the beginning of the war he had a surplus, amounting to over ten millions, to dispose of. Several of his proposals met with general approval, especially his restoration of the Sinking Fund, and his reduction of the income tax by 4d. "How much would you like me to take off the income tax? Would you like one penny? ('No, no.') Then twopence? ('No—more.') Then threepence? (Cheers.) Well, I propose to take off fourpence." (Great cheering.)

Having thus done something for the payers of direct taxation, Mr Ritchie thought he must, in conformity with the usual Treasury formula, do something for the indirect taxpayers also, and proceeded to announce that he had decided to repeal the small registration duty on corn imposed by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach last year as a permanent addition to the taxes in the country. Immediately there was trouble. Mr Chaplin arose and roundly attacked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, being loudly applauded by many Unionists (of whom I was one), who had never accepted the Cobdenite

tradition preserved by the Treasury officials, and who could not see why a tax should be sacrificed which brought in over two millions a year, and was undoubtedly paid largely by the foreigner. Ministers, however, seemed to pay little heed to this incipient revolt, and certainly expected that the Budget would cause next to no trouble in the party or elsewhere. It is clear that they were kept very badly informed. "How was the Budget received?" ask one of Mr Balfour's private secretaries of me the same afternoon. "Very well on the whole," I replied, "but the repeal of the corn duty is a great mistake, and will cause trouble." "Not at all," he said; "of course Harry Chaplin and Jim Lowther and a few other old fossils will make a fuss, but otherwise it will be all right; *it is a perfectly harmless Budget.*" This was, no doubt, the view instilled into the Prime Minister's ear.

As a matter of fact, the repeal of the corn duty was the immediate cause of all our fiscal troubles. The Chaplin agitation, indeed, did not go far. He organised a large deputation to Mr Balfour which I and many other Unionist M.P.'s attended, at which he made a very able and reasoned speech against Mr Ritchie's proposal. Mr Balfour, however, though sympathetic was obdurate. He maintained that the tax was not, and was not intended to be, protective, to which we all agreed; but he argued that it was so represented by the Opposition, and was not worth maintaining. He did not oppose food taxation in principle, and held that it might be conceded to achieve some great Imperial object, which, however, he thought was out of the question at present.

While Mr Balfour was disappointing our hopes in London, Mr Chamberlain was making a speech at

Birmingham bringing within the range of practical politics the very thing which Mr Balfour was saying was outside it, and was arguing in favour of some alteration of our hide-bound fiscal system in order to meet the views of our colonists, and to make preferential trade within the Empire possible. Those who like myself had listened to Mr Balfour on Friday afternoon rubbed our eyes with astonishment when we read our papers on Saturday morning. It was clear that something lay behind, which was, I believe, as follows.

Mr Chamberlain, who was the first Colonial Secretary who really appreciated the self-governing colonies, and saw their enormous potential strength to the Empire, had long been seeking, as had another great empire-builder, Mr Rhodes, for some practical and convenient tie with which to bind them to the motherland. Feeling that closer trade relations would probably lead to closer political relations (as had happened in Germany and elsewhere), his mind turned to some plan of a Zollverein or Imperial Commercial Union. The ideal plan would, of course, have been complete Free Trade within the Empire with a ring fence of customs duties against the foreigner all round. But Mr Chamberlain knew that the colonists were not ready for this. Therefore, he adopted a policy of preference, and his views were confirmed by the action of Canada in actually granting a preference to British goods, and by the line taken by all the colonial representatives at the conference in 1902. Even before 1902 Mr Chamberlain had been urging preference on his colleagues, and had been anxious that all the new taxes imposed during the war should be made preferential, but in this he was successfully resisted by Sir Michael

Hicks-Beach. In the meantime, in his public speeches in the country, as has already been seen, he had frequently avowed his desire for some preferential system for Imperial purposes. After the Colonial Conference and the unanimous resolutions then passed, it was only natural that he should put the case more strongly. Indeed, when he is blamed for "springing the Fiscal question on the country," it seems to me that the criticism is most unjust, for, as Colonial Secretary, it was his duty to acquaint the people of England with the unanimous wishes of their colonists, and it would be more reasonable to blame him for having delayed for eight or nine months before speaking as he did. The settlement of South Africa and his visit there were the causes of this delay. When he returned, the matter had been complicated by the decision of Mr Ritchie and the Cabinet to repeal the corn duty, which Mr Chamberlain had regarded as being in every way adapted for a fair experiment in preference, and which was so regarded by leading statesmen in Canada and Australia. Mr Chamberlain's Birmingham speech was undoubtedly made for the purpose of reassuring the colonists, and showing them that he, at all events, adhered to the policy of Imperial trade relations; and there was no intention of precipitating a political crisis at home. But the extraordinary juxtaposition of this speech with Mr Balfour's, and the action of several members of the Cabinet, especially Mr Ritchie, rendered the crisis inevitable.

It was not long before the question came before the House of Commons. The week after the Birmingham speech, Mr Remnant moved the second reading of a Private Members Bill, one of the authors

of which was Mr Goulding, for providing old age pensions for the deserving poor. The Bill was generally supported by members in all parts of the House, and the Government were willing to give it a second reading and send it to a Select Committee, when in the course of the debate Mr Chamberlain happened to drop in more or less accidentally, and quite unexpectedly took part in it. After reiterating his well-known views, and rebutting the charge that old age pensions were a dead question, he finished by saying: "But before any Government can consider a scheme of that kind, it must know where it is going to get the funds. . . . I think it may not be impossible to find the funds, but that no doubt will entail a review of that fiscal system which I have indicated as necessary and desirable at an early date." This, however, was only an *obiter dictum*, and the wisdom of it was much criticised at the time. Old age pensions were subsequently dropped out of Mr Chamberlain's experimental plan of Fiscal Reform, and an immediate return for any increase in price due to the new duties proposed was substituted in the shape of the reduction of the existing duties on tea, sugar, tobacco, etc.; but it is curious to note that the demand by the Labour Party for old age pensions, coupled with the inability of the present Liberal Government to find the funds under our existing fiscal system, has since done more to bring Tariff Reform to the front than anything else.

A few days later, on the Whitsuntide adjournment, the question came before Parliament in a far more direct manner. Sir Charles Dilke introduced the subject, asking, as he was fully entitled to do, whether the Government intended to adopt Colonial Preference as a policy, and to alter the

fiscal system which had hitherto prevailed. An intensely interesting debate followed. Mr Balfour did not repudiate Mr Chamberlain, agreed with Imperial preference in principle, thought, and had long thought, that some change was necessary in order that we should have some weapon wherewith to fight foreign tariffs, but promised that no change should be made in the course of the existing Parliament. Lord Hugh Cecil expressed his distrust of any fiscal change, and then Mr Chamberlain rose and made an extraordinarily candid statement of his policy. After repudiating altogether the suggestion that raw material would be taxed, he went on to say, "If you are to give a preference to the Colonies—I do not say that you are—you must put a tax upon food." The phrase was unfortunate. It unduly alarmed the country. It gave the Opposition a splendid weapon. The *Westminster Gazette* quoted it on its front page every night for months afterwards. I do not mean to say that Colonial Preference is possible without the imposition of small duties on certain articles of food imported from abroad. Having looked at the matter from every point of view, I do not think that it is. But this does not involve a tax on food in the sense that the cost of food would be increased as the phrase rather suggested, and as the Radicals affirmed. Under Mr Chamberlain's scheme, the cost of food would probably be materially reduced. The statement, however, delighted the Radicals, scared many Unionists, and caused considerable embarrassment to some of Mr Chamberlain's best supporters. Following this speech, Mr Winston Churchill roundly attacked Mr Chamberlain, adopting an attitude on this question to which he has actually adhered ever since. Another Unionist,

Mr Pemberton, the clever but somewhat silent member for Sunderland, expressed his grave doubts. After this we descended to the ridiculous, and Mr Galloway Weir, who, in consequence of his interminable questions on things of microscopic importance had earned the name of Mr "Weary Weir," quickly emptied the House by talking about deer forests, calf-lymph, the grievances of crofters, and the like; and we departed for the holidays.

For the rest of the session, though the practical consideration of the question was barred for the Parliament, there was no escaping from it. It became a veritable King Charles's head. It arose at once on the consideration of the Budget. Mr Chaplin had put down an amendment, substituting the reduction of the duty on tea for the repeal of the corn duty. We had expected that many Unionist members would support this, and, judging from the large number who had attended the deputation to Mr Balfour, there was good ground for this expectation. But, thanks largely to the confusion caused by the launching of the fiscal policy, and the feeling, in which Mr Chaplin himself shared, that the repeal of this small duty paled into insignificance before the great issues raised by Mr Chamberlain, and partly also to the tremendous pressure put on members by the Whips and others to get them to support the Government, our members dwindled terribly, and we only numbered twenty-eight in the lobby. The debate, however, was memorable, though hardly creditable to the Government, and it disclosed the existence of a serious split in the Unionist Party. Mr Ritchie went out of his way to criticise adversely Mr Chamberlain's proposals, and we began to ask ourselves what had become of the old doctrine of the

undivided responsibility of a Cabinet. He was supported in this by several ex-Unionist Ministers; by Sir M. Hicks-Beach, who said that but for the proposals for preference he should have opposed the repeal of the Corn Tax; by Sir J. Gorst, and others. Among the rank and file, Sir E. Vincent declared himself a "Free Trader," Mr A. Lee, a "Fair Trader." Speaking generally, the supporters of Mr Chamberlain appeared to prevail in the party. The Opposition were, of course, busy holding up the little loaf. Mr Balfour extricated the Government from their difficult position with great cleverness, stating that there was to be an official inquiry into the whole subject, to which apparently every member of the Cabinet was prepared to agree. It was at best a temporary expedient, but it tided the Government over until the prorogation.

The record of the rest of the session is simply a history of the Fiscal question. It is true that the debates on the Budget, the Irish Land Bill, and the London Education Bill were going on, but nobody except those personally interested cared much about them—we were all suffering from what became known as "fiscalitis," and every opportunity was seized to drag the great question before the House. Mr Chamberlain put down a trump card on the table by publishing a telegram from the Government of New South Wales approving of his policy, whereupon Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman moved the adjournment. He did not gain much by this motion, in fact he laid himself open to the charge of lacking sympathy with the colonies, which was not far removed from the truth. The question arose again on the Foreign Office vote, when our attitude towards Germany in defence

of Canada, which had been penalised in German markets because she had given a preference to the home country, was discussed and justified by Mr Chamberlain in a much applauded speech. The Government, however, steadily refused to give a day for the discussion of the Fiscal question, unless Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman was prepared to move a vote of censure, which he was not. Another opportunity occurred in the discussion on the Sugar Bounties Bill. For many years we had been trying to get rid of the sugar bounties, whereby West Indian sugar planting and British refining had been wellnigh ruined. Now, an International Convention which had lately sat at Brussels had succeeded in accomplishing this, but their decision had to be ratified by the various Parliaments. The Bill, which Mr Gerald Balfour introduced, gave rise to an interesting debate, though of a rather topsy-turvy order, for the Free Traders were defending bounties, than which nothing is more obnoxious to the orthodox, while the Fiscal Reformers were opposing them. The scheme of the Convention was indeed no ideal one. It of course favoured the West Indian planters, in the fact that they would no longer have to meet bounty-fed competition; but it contained an extraordinary provision, which prohibited preference for colonial sugar. It also, for some mysterious reason, enacted that the sugar of countries which refused to accept the Convention was to be excluded altogether, instead of being met by countervailing duties, which would have been the natural remedy. The only sugar-producing countries actually affected by this were Russia and the Argentine, and the amount of sugar sent by them here was so small as scarcely to count; but it gave the Opposition the

opportunity of saying that we were limiting the supply. The debate was memorable for a passage of arms between Mr Chamberlain and Mr Winston Churchill, who was coming to the front as an opponent of the Government in general, and of Mr Chamberlain in particular. His speech was far more concerned with the Fiscal question than with the Sugar Bounties, and in the course of it he advanced what he called a new theory, which he was good enough to "make a present of to the Prime Minister, as being the only person not grossly ignorant of the subject who had an open mind!" and he suggested that he "might have it tested." The theory was, that "old countries in which there were no new discoveries of mines, etc., must look, not so much to their basic industries for the development and expansion of their trade, as to the more complicated and secondary processes of manufacture." Mr Chamberlain replied, "Well, whatever he may say, no one will deny to my honourable friend the pleasure which he will anticipate when he goes to the great centres of industry and expounds his theory. He will go to Bradford, the centre of the woollen trade; to Oldham, (Mr Churchill's own constituency), in the midst of the cotton industry"—shouts of "Birmingham," to which Mr Chamberlain replied quite imperturbably, "Oh, Birmingham, *there* the trades and industries *are* rather complicated"—"to Barrow, the centre of the iron trade; to Belfast, the centre of the linen industry; and addressing a meeting of the working classes he will say, let us suppose, 'You belong to an old country. Here your primary industries must disappear. Their place will be taken by more complicated trades, and for you, gentlemen, I fear there is little hope. But

never mind. This great Empire will still remain firmly founded and inviolate on jam and pickles"—an allusion to the outcry raised by the jam makers, who feared a rise in price in consequence of the abolition of the sugar duties. The House, and especially the Tariff Reformers, roared with delight, and "jam and pickles" became one of Mr Chamberlain's stock-phrases; though why he should affect to despise this particular industry, which employed much labour, some of us could not quite understand. He concluded the passage as follows: "That is my new economic doctrine, irrefragable, my hon. friend says, and triumphant. Well, it may be irrefragable, but I wait for the result of that meeting to know whether it will be triumphant."

The Colonial Secretary's speech, which was one of the happiest he ever delivered in my hearing in the House, contained a passage on dumping, which is interesting in view of all that followed:—"My hon. friend (Mr Winston Churchill) said that this Bill was a model and an example of the great machinery which hereafter might be introduced to the country. He said that in the Sugar Bounties—and I agree with him—we had a great champion example of dumping *in excelsis*. I do not know of a better example of unfair competition by dumping below cost price to the detriment of a British industry than this. Yes, and that is why I hold that this debate is so instructive and so useful. Dumping is good—if it is good for one trade it is good for another. Therefore we come to this—all dumping is good. Very well, I am glad to have something to go upon."

The second reading was carried by a substantial majority, though a considerable number of Unionists who disapproved of the Bill either voted against it or

abstained altogether, some of whom, like Mr Cust, subsequently supported Mr Chamberlain's fiscal policy.

Shortly after this the prorogation took place. In the meantime, however, if little had been done openly in the Chamber, much had been going on in the lobbies and committee rooms. The Unionist Party, notwithstanding the existence of the Inquiry, had organised themselves into three groups. There were first of all the supporters of Mr Chamberlain, among whom I reckoned myself. We were a strong group numerically, and our leaders were Sir Herbert Maxwell, Messrs Parker Smith, A. Lee, Goulding, Sir Gilbert Parker, Pike Pease, White-Ridley, Sir A. Henderson, E. Cecil, Sir J. Lawrence, and, of course, H. Chaplin. Very soon, with the assistance of the Duke of Sutherland, Mr C. Arthur Pearson, the well-known newspaper proprietor, and others, we founded the Tariff Reform League; well named, for what we aimed at was not the introduction of any new thing, but the reform of the tariff we already possessed, with a view to its better adaptation to the present needs of British trade and of the Empire.

The second group were the opponents—often bitter opponents—of Mr Chamberlain, and they called themselves "the Free Food League," an absolute misnomer, for there never has been any free food in this world since the Israelites ceased to gather manna in the wilderness; nor is food free from taxation in this country, in which it contributes thirteen or fourteen millions to the revenue annually. They numbered among them one or two members whose position and abilities gave a certain distinction to the group, notably Sir M. Hicks-Beach and Lord Hugh Cecil, and there were also a few much-respected

old members of the party among them, such as Messrs Hayes Fisher, Yerburgh, and Tritton—the rest were chiefly malcontents who had long been seeking every opportunity of embarrassing the Government, such as Messrs Gibson Bowles, Winston Churchill, Ernest Beckett, Sir J. Dickson Poynder, and Major Seely; and in number they were less than half of the Tariff Reformers. They prided themselves, however, that they had all the brains of the party and all the clever young men, and we, not being superior persons, allowed them a monopoly of this kind of boasting. The third group, perhaps at present the largest of all, were those who, to use a phrase which has since become classical, had “nailed their colours to the fence.” Some were hopelessly puzzled by the proposals made by Mr Chamberlain. Others were even more puzzled by the attitude of Mr Balfour. To most caution was habitual, and they were not going to commit themselves rashly one way or the other. Their attitude was neither wonderful nor in any way to be blamed. The ordinary Tory member, however much in his heart he may have disbelieved in free imports, had come to regard that system as part of the existing order of things in this country, to question which was the height of folly, while the word “protection” was one not to be breathed. Now he found a complete alteration of that system, one which he thought might lead back to old-fashioned protection or anything else, proposed by Mr Chamberlain, whom up to quite recent years he had regarded as the most dangerous Radical in the country, and as a friend and disciple of Bright and Cobden. He may have privately hoped for some such change, but the question was, how would the country take it, especially the proposal for a tax on foreign corn, which, be

it observed, was to be imposed, not to protect the British farmer, but to give preference to the Colonist. Many of these members soon found salvation and joined the band of Tariff Reformers, a few went over to the Free Food League; but the largest number waited to see what Mr Balfour would do, and some are waiting still. Nobody can blame them for their early hesitation under the circumstances. So the session ended in confusion so far as the Unionist Party was concerned. We returned to our homes, but not to enjoy much holiday, for the Fiscal question raged as furiously during the prorogation as it had done during the latter part of the session.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FISCAL QUESTION IN THE COUNTRY, THE STRUGGLE FOR MR BALFOUR, AND THE THIRD RECONSTRU- CTION OF THE MINISTRY

ON the day of the prorogation a letter was published from Mr Chamberlain, addressed to me as Chairman of the Literature Committee of the Tariff Reform League, dealing with the question of the taxation of food. Some of us had been alarmed at the misrepresentations of his policy, which were being constantly made by the Opposition in the country ever since his speech on the Whitsuntide adjournment, and we had asked him to make a clear statement which could be published; and directly the fiscal silence imposed on themselves by the members of the Government had expired with the session, Mr Chamberlain wrote a letter, in which he said explicitly that there was nothing in the policy of Tariff Reform which he had put before the country which need increase in the slightest degree the cost of living in any family. The publication of this letter had a good effect.

A short lull in politics followed, broken only by the news of the death of Lord Salisbury, who had retired the year before. The announcement was received with general regret; and the fact, which gradually became known, that in his last days he had

adversely criticised Mr Chamberlain's proposals, though on many public occasions he had favoured the idea of some change in our fiscal policy, had influence with a considerable section of the Unionist Party. His death caused a vacancy at Rochester through the succession of Lord Cranborne to the peerage, and Mr Tuff, the Unionist candidate, who was a supporter of Mr Chamberlain, held the seat with an increased majority, thus scoring a victory for Tariff Reform.

Meanwhile events had been moving fast in London. The Cabinet had been summoned for September 14—a very early date in the holidays—and we all knew that the fiscal differences among its members must come to a head. It met again on the 15th, and three days later we read in the newspapers the extraordinary announcement that Mr Chamberlain, Mr Ritchie, and Lord George Hamilton had resigned. Now if Mr A. Chamberlain, Lord Selborne, Mr Walter Long, Mr Arnold Forster, and some other Ministers who were known to sympathise with Mr Chamberlain's views had retired with him, there would have been less cause for astonishment. It would simply have shown that Tariff Reform had been defeated in the Cabinet. But Mr Ritchie and Lord George were well-known free importers, and were regarded as Mr Chamberlain's fiscal arch-enemies. Their resignation with him seemed, therefore, most mysterious. Nor was the mystery ever quite cleared up. From the letters published and the speeches subsequently made, however, it appeared that Mr Balfour had decided to adopt a middle course—he was prepared to be a Tariff Reformer up to the point of retaliating or threatening to retaliate on foreign Governments who unfairly

penalised us in their markets, or who dumped here below cost price, thus breaking with the old Cobdenite doctrine of fighting hostile tariffs with free imports ; but he was not prepared to accept Mr Chamberlain's proposals for taxing certain articles of food in order to give a preference to the colonies, at all events not for the present. The first-named position involved the getting rid of the doctrinaire Free Traders in the Cabinet, the latter the resignation of Mr Chamberlain, which was freely proffered ; and the idea seemed to be the formation of a Ministry which was favourable to Tariff Reform in principle, but not prepared to do anything practical in that direction for the present, and which would be able to go to the country and say emphatically that food taxation was no part of its programme, although it certainly sympathised with colonial aspirations. How the Balfourite policy was to be carried out in fact was never explained. How, for example, could there be retaliation without the existence of a general tariff? or in what way was Colonial Preference to be granted without putting duties on such articles as corn and meat? This was a source of great embarrassment, the more so as every time Mr Balfour spoke Mr Chamberlain interpreted his speeches in one way, and Lord Hugh Cecil in the opposite. There was, in fact, a perpetual fight for Mr Balfour, each side claiming that he sympathised with them, and snatching at any casual phrase which appeared to confirm this view. The difficulties confronting Mr Balfour's position must, however, be fully realised in order that we may be just. He had, in a sense, inherited the Cecil leadership of the Unionist Party from Lord Salisbury, and his chieftaincy had been universally accepted. He came into the possession of a great

united party, which had successfully combated Home Rule, and had carried out a great Imperial policy in South Africa and throughout the British dominions. It was so far true that the party existed for other purposes than Tariff Reform, that as a matter of fact no tariff question had arisen at all for fifty years. Mr Balfour may have overrated the importance of the other problems before the party, he certainly under-estimated the strength of the feeling in favour of fiscal changes which Mr Chamberlain's proposals had evoked. His object, at any rate, was to keep the party together ; this he felt to be his paramount duty, and for two years he strove to invent a formula which would accomplish this end. It must be admitted that, so far as Parliament went, he was fairly successful. The number of members of the party shed in consequence of the Tariff question was not large, and most of those who went, as Mr Winston Churchill did, would probably have gone anyhow. But in my humble judgment his policy was fatal in the country. The man in the street did not understand it. He did not think it quite straight. In this he did an injustice to Mr Balfour. I believe that the Balfourite policy, the chief object of which was to keep the party together, exactly expressed Mr Balfour's opinions. He probably attached much less importance to tariffs and fiscal questions generally than most people did. In so far as he cared for such things, he was not a Free Trader in the sense that the members of the Cobden Club were ; he felt that times had changed, and our fiscal policy must change too ; but he was not a Protectionist, and not in favour of food taxes at present, even to secure so great an object as Imperial unity. He was convinced that if the Unionist Party

adopted the proposals for food taxation made by Mr Chamberlain, it would suffer a terrible defeat in the country. As a matter of fact, the Unionist Party was doomed in the country long before the Fiscal question arose (as was shown by the by-elections), and Mr Balfour's intermediate policy only made the position of Unionist candidates more difficult than it was before. "Do you follow Mr Balfour or Mr Chamberlain?" was a question which I was frequently asked at meetings. If I said "Mr Chamberlain," I was at once charged with disloyalty to the leader of my party; if I said "both," the meeting quickly showed that it could not believe that. No doubt other candidates had similar experiences.

I cannot narrate all the steps in the curious and complex drama which followed. Mr Balfour's difficulties in reconstructing his Ministry were exemplified by the sudden resignation of the Duke of Devonshire after he had agreed to remain, which was the consequence of Mr Balfour's speech at Sheffield, in which he stated (among other things) that he desired to reverse the fiscal traditions which had prevailed during the last two generations. At the conference of the National Union held at Sheffield on this occasion, I seconded Mr Chaplin's amendment in favour of Mr Chamberlain's policy, and this amendment would have been carried by a large majority of the delegates, but was withdrawn in consequence of an intimation conveyed to Mr Chaplin that if it were persisted in, Mr Balfour would give up the task of reconstructing his Ministry and resign at once. I remember a curious incident which occurred at Sheffield, which shows the distrust which Mr Balfour's Government and policy had already inspired among some members of the party. Not-

withstanding the general shuffle of offices, Mr Brodrick had so far remained War Secretary, much to the annoyance of a certain section, who somewhat unjustly regarded him as a great failure in that position. An "emergency resolution" was accordingly circulated round the conference which ran as follows:—"That this conference refuses to adjourn without recording its humble but hearty admiration of the extraordinary skill with which Mr Balfour has at once succeeded in eliminating Mr Chamberlain from the Cabinet while retaining the services of Mr Brodrick, an arrangement which makes for the efficiency of the Empire, and removes all doubt as to the result of the next General Election." This resolution was of course not intended seriously, and was not put to the conference, but it exemplifies the feeling of a section of the party.

A few days after the Sheffield conference Mr Chamberlain began at Glasgow his series of great speeches on the Fiscal question—the most remarkable effort of its kind since the Midlothian Campaign. At Glasgow, Greenock, Liverpool, Newcastle, Cardiff, Newport, Leeds, and finally in the City of London, he addressed enormous crowds, ending up generally with an overflow meeting, so great was the desire to hear him. At the overflow meeting at Leeds, I had a not altogether pleasant experience. I was the last of three speakers who had undertaken to address the meeting before his arrival, and it fell to me, therefore, to hold the fort till he actually came. The meeting was three-quarters full of Radicals, anxious to hear Mr Chamberlain, and growing more and more impatient when he did not appear at the time expected. The fact was that he had spoken at greater length at

the principal meeting than he intended, and was more than half an hour late. Meanwhile, I had to carry on somehow as best I could. I am sure that Wellington could not have prayed for the advent of Blucher more fervently than I did for that of Mr Chamberlain. At half-past ten he appeared, much to my relief. The effect of these speeches on the country was immense. Notwithstanding the fact that Mr Asquith and others dogged his steps, and replied to him wherever he went, it was clear that he was making converts by thousands. It looked at one time as if he would not only carry Tariff Reform at one bound, but even rescue the whole Unionist Party from the disfavour into which it had fallen. The terrible rot which over a year ago had set in at the by-elections was temporarily stayed. Dulwich, Lewisham, and Ludlow returned Chamberlainite Unionists by large majorities. If we had dissolved in November 1903, the Liberals might have got a majority with the aid of the Irish; but it would not have been a large one, and the strongest single party in the House would have been the Tariff Reformers. Mr Balfour, however, anxious to re-unite the party, and for this purpose to gain time, was unwilling to go to the country. Sir A. Acland-Hood, the Chief Whip, proclaimed that there would probably be no dissolution either then or next year, or even the year after. His forecast was justified to the letter, with what results we know. The golden opportunity was missed, and from that time on the country rapidly became impatient of a Government which had out-stayed its welcome, and which it thought was simply hanging on to office for the sake of the loaves and fishes. This idea may be an unfair one, but there it was, and it grew more and more intense as time

elapsed. So the Government moved on to its inevitable doom, and unfortunately it destroyed with itself the early chances of Tariff Reform.

Another cause of the change of feeling, which made itself manifest very early in 1904—as the disastrous by-elections at Norwich, Ashburton, and Gateshead showed—was the fact that the free importing forces had had time to rally. They had undoubtedly been taken completely by surprise by Mr Chamberlain's bold attack, so secure had they long felt in their Cobdenite stronghold. The Cobden Club, overburdened with a host of foreign vice-presidents had sunk into a condition of second childhood, and its members spent their time in muttering old-world shibboleths to each other with all the pedantry of the schoolmen. It was found quite unequal to the crisis, and a new body called the Free Trade Union, more efficient and far more unscrupulous, was brought into being, and was supported by large funds, contributed chiefly, it was believed, by foreigners anxious to keep British markets open, and by certain great British firms of tobacco and chocolate manufacturers, who, having protection for their own trades, and enjoying in consequence great prosperity, were eager to deny it to other businesses. The Free Trade Union very quickly got into touch with the constituencies, and the big and little loaf bogey was run for all it was worth, and with great effect. The merits of Mr Chamberlain's proposals were barely discussed; everywhere one heard the parrot cry, "Your food will cost you more"; even Lord Rosebery joining in the chorus, and stating at a public meeting that food had already risen in price in consequence of Mr Chamberlain's speeches!

In the meantime the third reconstruction of the Unionist Ministry had been accomplished. Mr Balfour had tried to induce Lord Milner to accept the Colonial Secretaryship vacated by Mr Chamberlain, but failing in this, had appointed Mr Lyttelton, who was new to office, but who proved an undoubted success. The clamour against Mr Brodrick succeeded in driving him from the War to the India Office, his place at the former being taken by Mr Arnold Forster, who was designated by public opinion as the one man capable of reforming the Army. The treatment of Mr Brodrick was peculiar. Either he had failed at the War Office or he had not. If he had not, why was he removed from it; if he had, why was he promoted to the India Office? In connection with the War Office, an even more extraordinary appointment took place, Mr Bromley Davenport, who a few months before had violently attacked Lord Roberts in connection with the Kinloch case, being made Financial Secretary. Lord Salisbury, who, as Lord Cranborne had represented the Foreign Office in the House of Commons, now entered the Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal, his place at the Foreign Office being taken by Lord Percy. Mr Arthur Lee, one of the Tariff Reform members, became Civil Lord of the Admiralty. The other appointments were in no respects remarkable, and not much interest was taken in them, it being generally assumed, notwithstanding Sir A. Acland-Hood's pronouncement, that the Government would not last much longer. Both sides, in fact, under-estimated Mr Balfour's tenacity of purpose, and his extraordinary Parliamentary skill, by which he was able to keep together for over two years a party which was divided against itself on the burning question of the day.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SESSION OF 1904

WHEN we met on February 2, the House presented a somewhat different appearance from what we were accustomed to. Mr Chamberlain was no longer on the Treasury Bench. He had retired to his old place, the corner seat of the third bench below the gangway, on the Government side, where he had sat at the head of his Liberal Unionist stalwarts during the Parliament of 1892-1895 pouring forth criticisms on the Home Rule Bill. Now he was supported by the stalwart Tariff Reformers, and we occupied most of the third and fourth benches below the gangway. Beneath us, on the first and second benches, were the ardent Free Fooders, among whom were to be seen occasionally other ex-Ministers, Lord G. Hamilton and Mr Ritchie; the more moderate of the clan usually occupying the second bench, while the extreme malcontents, Mr Winston Churchill, Major Seely, and Sir J. Dickson Poynder, got as near to the Opposition as they could by sitting on the front bench, and we all felt that they would soon cross over, and some of us thought the sooner they did so the better. Not indeed that this arrangement was fixed or permanent. Our party was at this time very much mixed, and Tariff Reformers often found them-

selves strangely sandwiched between extreme Free Fooders, while we had to share the fourth bench with Mr T. W. Russell and his exiguous party of two, whose opinions on Irish questions were almost as difficult to apprehend as were Mr Balfour's on the Fiscal question. Meanwhile on the Treasury Bench sat Mr Lyttelton and the other new Ministers. Mr Balfour himself was absent. He was laid up with influenza, and the leadership devolved on Mr Akers Donglas, Mr A. Chamberlain being the chief speaker. Behind Ministers sat a solid phalanx of Ministerialists, some Tariff Reformers, others Free Traders ; the majority probably having no definite views, and many not wishing to have any, at least, until the situation cleared a little ; but who, at all events, were anxious to maintain their party loyalty intact, and no less anxious to avoid cutting their Parliamentary existence short by an early dissolution.

The general topsy-turvydom which this new grouping suggested was an accurate reflection of the state of the party. The situation was indeed without parallel. Mr Chamberlain had introduced an immense and entirely new problem since the General Election, the solution of which he declared to be urgent. The various members of the Government admitted the importance and even the urgency of the problem, yet they declined to deal with it in the present Parliament, and evidently intended not to dissolve for some time to come. And one of the most important members of the Government was Mr Chamberlain's own son, who was known to share Mr Chamberlain's views ! No wonder the ordinary M.P. was puzzled, to say nothing of the man in the street. It at all events speaks volumes for Mr Balfour's Parliamentary dexterity, that under such circum-

stances he kept his majority together for two whole sessions, and was never defeated except on a snap vote.

The legislative programme in the King's Speech was unambitious, and was confined to two measures of importance, a Bill to restrict the immigration of aliens and a Licensing Bill. Only the latter became law. Members, however, cared little for legislation ; they wanted to get to grips on the Fiscal question, and they succeeded in doing so on February 8, when Mr Morley rose to move the official Opposition amendment to the Address. His speech was not particularly effective—I do not think that Mr Morley ever quite did himself justice in the House of Commons—but as the biographer of Cobden he was clearly the right man to vindicate his patron saint's policy, and it is needless to say that his speech was, as always, obviously sincere. Now followed the most extraordinary debate I ever heard. Not extraordinary from the Opposition point of view, unless it was extraordinary that they were all agreed for once in a way ; but most extraordinary from the Government point of view. Not only did private members on the Ministerial side get up and contradict each other for six consecutive nights, but Ministers themselves did the same! No doubt their position was difficult in the extreme. Both Mr Balfour and Mr Chamberlain were absent—the former through illness, the latter, who had intended to be present for the beginning of the debate before going abroad for a well-earned rest, being stopped by the sudden death in the House of his old friend and colleague, Mr Powell Williams—a great loss to the party and the Tariff Reform cause. First of all Mr Gerald Balfour rose, and in a speech which, by comparison, made Mr Morley's seem the highest

eloquence, greatly exhilarated the Free Fooders by declaring against Protection, and refusing to defend Mr Chamberlain's scheme. The next day our turn came, when Mr Bonar Law, in a really brilliant speech, fully justified our position by the examples he gave of evils inflicted on British trades by dumping, which appeared to have some effect even on members of the Opposition. Mr Lyttelton followed on the same lines, but with greater reserve, while Mr Wyndham harked back more to the position of Mr Gerald Balfour. Meanwhile, on our back benches a furious fight was raging. We paid little attention to the heavy guns of the Opposition booming opposite ; we were far too busy enfilading each other up and down our own benches, or turning about to reply to an attack from the rear, or sniping members in front of us. The Free Fooders had perhaps the heavier ordnance ; we had nothing on the Tariff Reform side quite of the calibre of Lord Hugh Cecil's up-to-date artillery, or the heavy and obsolete muzzle-loaders of Sir John Gorst or Mr Ritchie, but the lighter, quick-firing guns of Sir Gilbert Parker, Mr Pike Pease, Mr Parker Smith and many others, were effective. So we went on ; and if words meant anything, there would have been nothing left of the Unionist Party at the end. At last the debate closed, Mr Akers Douglas winding up for the Government in a speech which, from the House of Commons' point of view, was most extraordinary, since he seemed to ignore the existence of the Opposition altogether, and might have been addressing a Party meeting at the Carlton Club, but under the circumstances was really very judicious. It came practically to this, that the policy of the Government and the party was the Balfourite idea of retaliation (which he was too wise to attempt

to define), but that members were quite at liberty to go further and advocate Mr Chamberlain's policy, if by so doing they did not fall out with their local associations. With which sage suggestion the debate terminated, and Mr Morley's amendment was rejected by 51 votes; twenty-seven Unionist Free Fooders voting against the Government, fourteen for it, and twelve not at all, from which it appears that the Free Fooders themselves were as much divided as was the party as a whole.

The Fiscal question was, however, by no means the only matter of importance discussed on the Address. We had interesting debates on two other questions, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Conduct of the War in South Africa, and the proposed introduction of Chinese Labour into South Africa, neither of which improved the position of the Government. It is a sad reflection that each year which the Government stayed on after the termination of the war and the introduction of the Fiscal question added several fresh counts to the indictment against them. We already had to face the great unpopularity of the Education Acts, and the confusion caused by our divisions on Tariff Reform; but 1904 brought us in addition, Chinese Labour, the War Commission Report, and the Licensing Act; and 1905 (to glance ahead for a moment) the disastrous Wyndham-Antony Macdonnell imbroglio in Ireland, the alienation of the Volunteers by Mr Arnold Forster, and the unfortunate remarks of Lord Stanley, which turned nearly every postal employee into a Radical agent. Surely Nemesis was pursuing us for our overweening prosperity during the war and the years which preceded it.

It would be unfair, however, in the case of either

the War Commission Report or Chinese Labour, to hold the Government to blame, their conduct in the latter being, in fact, patriotic and unselfish in the extreme. Mr Robson, one of the few eminent lawyers in the House who was an effective Parliamentary debater, moved the amendment on the Report of the War Commission. The discussion which followed was on a high level, and on the whole the Government came out of it well. Three facts were established :—

- (1) That the preparations for war during the conduct of the negotiations were seriously impeded by the speeches of the Opposition, and especially of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman.
- (2) That the Army and the War Office had been organised for years with a view to the possibility of despatching two army corps abroad, and that the Government could not be blamed if there were breakdown when it was found necessary to send troops equal to six army corps. That in most respects the work was well done, and the troops sent were, generally speaking, well armed, clothed, supplied and housed.
- (3) That the Intelligence Department was fully aware of the magnitude of the Boer armaments, but that this information had been apparently pigeon-holed at the War Office, and never communicated to Lord Lansdowne and the Government, and that the Government had sent out more men than the military authorities had asked for.

A very animated and interesting passage of arms took place between Mr Chamberlain and Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, which brought to light the fact that on June 20, 1899, the former had consulted the latter and asked whether the Opposition, in view

of the gravity of the situation, would consent to the despatch of an additional 10,000 men to South Africa ; but Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman had refused this patriotic request, and had replied that the Government must do it on their own responsibility. From which we can judge the sincerity of the Opposition in now condemning the Government for their lack of preparation. But for all this the report of the Commission did harm to the Government in the country, where the people were feeling the continual burden of war taxation, which they held would have been lighter but for the early blunders of the war. Blunders are always attributed to the Government of the day.

Then as to Chinese Labour. I have previously referred to the shortage of native labour in the Transvaal since the war, and to the fact that Mr Chamberlain, on his return from South Africa, had expressed himself as opposed to the importation of Asiatics to work the mines. When he was there the necessity for it had not become apparent, and the preponderance of opinion in the Transvaal was against the suggestion. But since then it had become obvious that something must be done. The absence of unskilled labour in sufficient quantity had arrested the development of the mines, which were the sole source of the Colony's prosperity. A Labour Commission, appointed by the Transvaal Government, had clearly established that the labour could not be obtained in South Africa, and that recourse must be had—temporarily, at all events—to importation from elsewhere. If this were done, the mines could go ahead, and employment would be found for large numbers of additional whites—if it were not, bankruptcy and the reduction of the white, especially

of the British, population would result. A great change in consequence had come over opinion in the Transvaal, and the Legislative Council had passed an ordinance for the importation of Chinese Labour under strict regulations, the ablest advocate of the measure being Sir Richard Solomon, who was generally regarded as a Liberal in politics, and no particular friend of the Mining Magnates. This ordinance was sent home for confirmation, and was allowed to pass with modifications in detail, Mr Lyttelton and the Government taking the view that we had no right to arrest the development of the Colony, and that inasmuch as labour ordinances, very similar in character, had been passed for many other British colonies, there was no reason why this should be disallowed in the case of the Transvaal, where we were all anxious to see a restoration of prosperity.

Now it might have been thought that the Opposition would take the same view, and would have regarded such a matter as of a non-party and uncontentious character ; and I have good reason for believing that this was the original intention of some of their leaders, who, though they may not have liked Chinese Labour, saw the necessity for it, and were prepared to support Lord Milner in asking for it. But the party wire-pullers of the baser order saw in it a magnificent cry against the Government, better even than the Education Bill or the Little Loaf, for, by grossly perverting the terms of the ordinance, they could represent the condition of the Chinese labourers as slavery, and they could also suggest that the work might really be done by whites but for the greed of the Mining Magnates, who wanted it done on the cheap by "pigtails," a suggestion which

everybody who knew South Africa knew to be impossible. And their partisan view prevailed over the more honourable wishes of the Opposition leaders, with the result that the most unscrupulous and immoral political agitation of recent days took place, which, however, for the time being, was eminently successful. No doubt there were many perfectly honest and honourable men who joined in the agitation from conscientious motives, who were themselves deceived by the statements they heard and read. But what are we to say about persons like Mr Birrell, who, as Chairman of the Publication Department of the Liberal Party, lent his name to the scandalously false placards and leaflets issued by that Department representing the Chinamen in chains, etc., which he must have known were grossly untrue? I referred just now to Nemesis. Believers in that old-world doctrine will note with satisfaction the ill-luck which has dogged Mr Birrell's footsteps ever since.

I am afraid that if I pursued this topic further, I should lose any title I might ever have for impartiality. But there are occasions when justice and apparent partiality coincide. On most questions I can see quite well the point of view of the Opposition. I can understand the objection of many Nonconformists to the Education Acts, or of life-long Free Traders to Mr Chamberlain's proposals; or again, the feelings of those who were perhaps unfairly termed "pro-Boers," to the war. Members of the United Kingdom Alliance not unnaturally objected to the Licensing Act of 1904, and Trades Unionists to the Taff Vale Decision. But the Chinese Slavery cry was nothing else than a deliberate lie, and the whole agitation a discreditable party fraud, and if

the Liberal Party does not suffer for it, there is no justice in this world.

Some members, however, did very well out of it, and climbed to eminence on the Chinese pigtail, notably Mr Herbert Samuel, who first brought the question before the House by an amendment to the Address on February 16. Major Seely, who by this time had almost forgotten the way into the Government lobby, seconded. A violent speech in support of the amendment was made by Mr John Burns, who, however, was chiefly animated by hatred of the capitalists on the Rand, and seemed to care for little besides hurting them. Mr Lyttelton and Mr Brodrick made effective and conclusive replies on behalf of the Government, and the debate terminated with the closure. A debate on the Unemployed followed, introduced by Messrs Keir Hardie and Crooks, the Labour members, and the existence of a large and constantly growing class of able-bodied men who could not get work seemed to point to the necessity for some fiscal change, though the Labour members (at present at all events) would not admit this. After this the Address was agreed to.

We now set about the business of the nation, but do what they would the Government could not get rid of the Fiscal question. We Tariff Reformers did not, of course, desire that they should, and though Mr Chamberlain was away enjoying a holiday on the Continent, we carried on a vigorous and ceaseless agitation in the country. Very shortly it cropped up again in the House. On March 7 Mr John Ellis moved the adjournment, in order to elicit from Mr Balfour a statement as to the circumstances attending the Cabinet crisis of last September and the resignation of Lord G. Hamilton, Mr Ritchie,

and the other free-importing Ministers. The House, which loves personal questions, was packed to overflowing, but I do not intend to attempt to give any detailed account of what occurred here. It is sufficient to say that in consequence of a speech made by Lord G. Hamilton to his constituents, the idea had got about that he and Mr Ritchie had been "jockeyed out" of the Cabinet by Mr Balfour, since, when they resigned, they were not aware, or thought they were not, that Mr Chamberlain had also resigned, and that preference and taxation of food were not to form part of the Government policy; there was also a mysterious document alleged to have been circulated by Mr Balfour to the Cabinet as an alternative to his Economic Notes on Insular Free Trade, and which advocated the preferential policy. It was clear from the debate, however, that there had been a *bonâ fide* misunderstanding on both sides, which both sides were now anxious to forget, Lord G. Hamilton concluding a most dignified speech by saying that "the one portion of his political life which he should endeavour to obliterate from his memory was that portion which embraced the closing incidents of his public career."

Two days later a far more exciting incident occurred, which very nearly brought the Government to an abrupt close. Mr Pirie, a Scottish Radical member, who was greatly to the fore just now, had obtained by the ballot the evening of March 9 for a private members' resolution, and he had placed upon the paper the following motion:—"That this House, noting the continued agitation in favour of preferential and protective tariffs, which is encouraged by the language used by certain of His Majesty's Ministers, deems it necessary to express

its condemnation of any such policy." The words were skilfully chosen, as they were designed to catch the Free Fooders *en bloc*, thus causing the Government to have a very small majority in the division, with the possibility (though not a probability) of their being defeated. We wondered what course the Government intended to take, but had no intimation till the morning of the 9th, when there appeared on the order paper an amendment in the name of Mr Wharton, one of the oldest and most respected members of the party, to the effect that the House "approved of the explicit declaration of the Government that their policy of Fiscal Reform did not include either a general system of Protection or Preference based on the taxation of food." Now Mr Wharton was known to be a very loyal member of the party, who so far had consistently followed Mr Balfour on the Fiscal question, and the wording of the whip that morning clearly indicated that the amendment had been put down with the knowledge, and probably at the suggestion of the Government, and that they intended to support it. It was, however, clearly impossible for Tariff Reformers to vote for it. It meant condemning what we had been advocating in the country for the last six months. Directly I had read the whip, I wired to a dozen members of the Tariff Reform Committee to meet in my room at the House (as Charity Commissioner I had no pay, but I had a room and also a despatch-box, and the right to wear a very fine uniform, which had to be purchased out of my salary), at 2.15. We met, Sir Herbert Maxwell, Mr Chaplin, Mr Pike Pease, Mr Goulding, Mr Parker Smith, and others. We agreed that on no account could we support the Wharton amendment, and that we would assemble a general

meeting of Tariff Reformers at once. All the afternoon Mr Goulding and I spent in the lobby, whipping up for the meeting, which took place at 6 o'clock in one of the Committee rooms, and was attended by 112 members. The greatest enthusiasm and unanimity prevailed, and we decided that we must vote against the Government unless the Wharton amendment were withdrawn, and an intimation to that effect was at once conveyed to the Whips. When the House reassembled at 9 o'clock for the evening sitting, it had disappeared from the Agenda paper. After this the debate fell rather flat. The Opposition, of course, made the most of the vanishing amendment, as they were fully entitled to do. Mr Cripps made a good Tariff Reform speech. Mr Balfour, on behalf of the Government, strongly opposed Mr Pirie's motion, but was careful to limit himself to his Sheffield Programme. He ended by saying that when he came to write his election address he should ask for the granting of powers of retaliation on foreign nations who penalised us in their markets, which he had advocated at Sheffield, to which Mr Chaplin replied that he should put a good deal more into his address, and that he had the best reasons in the world for knowing that he would be expressing the opinions of a large number of members of the party. After this the vote was taken, and the Government had a majority of 46. The Free Fooders were again divided, Lord H. Cecil and the majority voting against the Government, Sir M. Hicks-Beach and the minority in favour.

So ended the Wharton crisis, out of which the Government emerged successfully, much more by good luck than good management. They were, in

fact, saved by the Tariff Reformers. How they ever got themselves into such a bungle, and who was the real author of the Wharton amendment, have always been somewhat of a mystery. It was said that it was composed by one of Mr Balfour's private secretaries with the assent of the Whips, and that Mr Balfour himself never saw it till it appeared in print the next day. I repeat this just as Herodotus repeated many stories "told him by the priests," but I do not add that "I don't believe it." The fact is that, after the retirement of Mr Chamberlain in September last year, the Government were always taking action inimical to the Tariff Reform, both in the House and in the country, and were striving hard to conciliate the Free Fooders, though most of the latter were quite irreconcilable, and though they were a small fraction of the party in the House and a much smaller fraction in the country. We felt it deeply, especially as we had been repeatedly assured by Mr Balfour and other members of the Government that there was no disloyalty in holding fiscal views in advance of those of the Government, and Mr Balfour had himself wished well to Mr Chamberlain in his Preferential mission. I have never ceased to believe that Mr Balfour himself was not really hostile to us, but a certain clique of understrappers and wire-pullers acting in his name did untold mischief. The Central Conservative organisation in particular, utterly ineffective as it was against the Opposition, succeeded in thwarting the Tariff Reform movement throughout the country, and created party differences and difficulties where they would not otherwise have existed.

We enjoyed a short respite from alarms and excursions, during which the Army and Navy votes

were introduced, the former being remarkable for the appearance of Mr Arnold Forster as War-Lord *vice* Mr Brodrick, and the institution, on the recommendation of the Esher Committee, of the Army Council. The Committee probably thought that a board of military experts would act as a check on the idiosyncrasies of varying war secretaries, but they clearly did not foresee its extreme pliability. But the Chinese Labour question was now beginning to eclipse even the Fiscal question in public excitement, and Mr Lyttelton, who had announced that the Government would not disallow the ordinance, was daily plied with questions on the subject. It is extraordinary how it got hold of popular imagination, especially in London and the large towns. Probably the pigtail had something to do with it. About this time occurred the triennial London County Council Election. There was a very important question to be decided by the new Council, that of the management and control of the schools under the new Education Act for London. But the elections did not turn on this half so much as they did on Chinese Labour, although the L.C.C. had no more to do with Chinese Labour than had the Parish Council of Little Pedlington, or the Parliament of the Planet Mars. I was asked by a friend of mine, who was standing for Stepney, to take my motor down on the election day and help to drive up voters to the poll, which I did. When first I arrived at the polling booth a crowd of opponents gathered round me and, after carefully looking at my car, one of them remarked, "Hullo, what is this? Why, it is a Chinese car!" Later on, as I was driving a large load of the free and independent, a man standing with a little knot of friends at a street corner suddenly

shouted out, "Look out, sir, stop." I pulled up as quickly as I could, doing, probably, great damage to my tyres, thinking, of course, that something dreadful had happened, and then was greeted with a hoarse laugh and the remark, "You have got a pigtail hanging on behind." The result of this Chinese Election was the overwhelming defeat of the Conservative or "Moderate" Party.

In the House of Commons the Opposition moved a vote of censure on the subject. It took place on March 21, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman himself being the proposer. Mr Lyttelton made an admirable speech in reply. The most memorable part of the debate occurred, however, in the evening, while Major Seely was speaking amid constant interruption. The fact was that Unionist members had got heartily sick of Major Seely, Mr Winston Churchill, and one or two others, who still sat among the party and nominally belonged to it, but who took every occasion to attack their friends. So nettled was Major Seely with the reception he received, that he announced that he should at once resign his seat, and stand again as an independent member. Great cheers greeted this statement, and Major Seely was as good as his word. By an arrangement with the local Liberal Party, he was adopted as their candidate *pro. tem.* for the Isle of Wight, and was returned unopposed, our party not venturing to fight him, to such straits had we been reduced. His conduct was, at all events, straightforward and honourable, and contrasted favourably with that of several other of the malcontents; though it is fair to add that Mr Winston Churchill also offered to resign his seat at Oldham, but so weak did our party feel then that they asked him not to do so! He was shortly afterwards

adopted Liberal candidate for N.-W. Manchester. The vote of censure was defeated by 57. Another scene of a less heated but more amusing character occurred on the motion for the Easter adjournment, upon which Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman made a long rambling speech containing several well-prepared jokes, impugning generally the policy of the Government, and Mr Lloyd-George, who was rapidly rising to the top of the tree as an Opposition critic, followed on the same lines. After he sat down, Mr Churchill arose. Immediately, one by one, the Unionist members began to leave the House. The disastrous effect on Mr Churchill's rhetoric was piteous to behold, for, while nobody could deny his great ability in dealing with a hostile audience, he was by no means equal to the absence of an audience. We were, of course, rebuked for our courtesy by various superior persons. But, after all, there is no law compelling a man to sit and listen to abuse of himself by a person who pretends to be his friend.

Just before this the Aliens Bill was introduced. It was a good Bill so far as it went, but it did not go far enough; and, as it finally passed in the following year, it depended too much on its administration for its success, which has enabled a Liberal Government to make many of its provisions a dead letter. But we were grateful for anything which could restore to us a little of our departed popularity.

The Government had weathered the storm up to Easter, and opportunities for private members' discussion being now less frequent, it began to be clear that they would last the session. Indeed, so long as the Unionists held together, they could not be turned out, and, however much they may have differed from each other on the Fiscal question, the great majority

were agreed in wishing to postpone an appeal to the country. The expense and worry of a General Election, and still more the possibility, very great in the present case, of not being returned again, always predispose the average member to put off the evil day as long as possible ; and, as things were, no section of the party was strong enough to force a dissolution, except, possibly, the Tariff Reformers, and they would only have done so if Mr Chamberlain had insisted upon it. But he did nothing of the kind, and both in public and in private he constantly asserted his determination to support the Ministry and keep them in for the present. Possibly future historians will record that by his loyalty to Mr Balfour he seriously jeopardised, and certainly postponed, the triumph of Tariff Reform. Of course, another Wharton amendment would have quickly brought the Government down. The lesson had been learnt, however, and the party managers were careful to avoid such mistakes for the future.

After our reassembly, the first important debate took place on the Budget, which was introduced by our new and youthful Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Austen Chamberlain, in a very able speech. The circumstances attending his statement were, however, somewhat dismal, as Mr Ritchie, in his desire to take as many pennies off the income tax as possible, had blundered badly in his estimates, and left to his successor a deficit of no less than five millions. This Mr A. Chamberlain met partly out of Treasury Balances, partly by selling stock which represented the value of the dividends at compound interest on unclaimed Government stock ; while, for the remainder, which amounted to a million and a half, he looked to the surpluses of the succeeding years. For the future

he had to propose additional taxation—an extra penny on the income tax, an increase in the tea duty, and various increases in the tobacco duties, including an extra 3d. on stripped tobacco, which was designed and largely succeeded in introducing the stripping business into this country. This part of the Budget was quite in accordance with the doctrines of Tariff Reform; but Mr Austen Chamberlain was able to show that the tobacco duties had always been slightly protective in character, and had been so arranged purposely by Mr Gladstone, who stated that he allowed the difference between the rates on manufactured and on raw tobacco as a free and fair equivalent for all the charges to which the British manufacturer was subject, "and in order that the labourers who were employed in the manufacture might be well looked after." This quotation was loudly cheered—it might have been taken from one of Mr Chamberlain's fiscal speeches!

How curious it is to reflect that, notwithstanding this, or perhaps in consequence of it, the members of several leading firms of British tobacco manufacturers, *e.g.*, the Wills, were keen supporters of the maintenance of the present fiscal system, while, similarly, Mr Chamberlain had no greater opponents than the Cadburys, who enjoyed even greater protection in the manufacture of chocolate. This part of Mr Austen Chamberlain's speech was greatly cheered by Tariff Reformers, while another passage in which he condemned Municipal extravagance, and suggested that it was little use paying off the National Debt while municipalities were borrowing right and left, greatly pleased the average Conservatives, and equally offended the Progressive Radicals of the London County Council type.

The Budget was, of course, discussed on many separate occasions and at various stages. On the whole it was approved, but considerable opposition was raised to the new tobacco duties. An exciting scene took place, in which Mr McKenna charged the Chancellor of the Exchequer with having had something very like a corrupt deal with an Irish tobacco manufacturer named Gallaher, who, he alleged, had imported vast quantities of unstripped tobacco in anticipation of the new duty, immediately before the Budget was introduced. Pressed by Mr Balfour, he had the good sense, later on, to withdraw this infamous charge, but I have since read that by his gallant and somewhat inaccurate conduct on this occasion he established his claim (which has been fulfilled) to be a member of the next Liberal Cabinet. Truly, the qualifications for Cabinet rank are amazing. The Budget passed its successive stages with much discussion, but no serious alteration.

In the meantime, however, other important questions were before the House. The crisis in the Church had reappeared after the war, and it must be admitted that the continued and progressive extravagances of a section of the extreme Ritualistic Party were such as to cause great annoyance and alarm, not only to the Low Church but also to those who may be called moderate High Churchmen. The Government determined to deal with the question by appointing a Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Disorders, and the motion was made by Mr Balfour on April 20. The names proposed were admirably selected, every section and shade of opinion being represented, and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was proposed as Chairman; but they did not find favour with Mr Austen Taylor, who had been returned for

one of the divisions of Liverpool at a by-election, and was the leader of the straitest sect of Protestants in that most Protestant of cities. He was also a leading Free Fooder, and it may be said of him that his love of freedom in trade was only equalled by his dislike of freedom in the Church. He roundly declared that the Protestant Party was not represented on the Commission at all, to which Mr Balfour well replied by asking whether Sir John Kennaway, Sir Samuel Hoare, and Mr Drury, the Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, an institution founded to perpetuate the principles of the Reformation, were not Protestants? The Commission was appointed.

The same day, Mr Akers Douglas introduced the Licensing Bill, which was the principal measure of the session. Mr Balfour had promised, a year ago, to deal with the question, a crisis having been precipitated by the action of certain benches of magistrates in refusing the renewal of licenses, not on the ground of misconduct, but simply because the houses were redundant, and a reduction in the number was desirable. No doubt the magistrates were within their legal rights in so doing, but it was a new departure, the invariable practice for years having been to renew all licenses except where misconduct had taken place, on which understanding houses had been bought and sold and even taxed by the State. There was, in consequence, a general feeling that in all such cases of reduction compensation ought to be given; that if this were not done the movement in favour of reducing the number of public-houses would be stopped by a sense of the injustice inflicted; and that the present state of uncertainty which resulted in some benches taking away licenses wholesale, while others left

matters as they were, could not be allowed to continue. The proposals of the Bill appeared to me to be eminently fair. There was to be compensation in all cases where a license was taken away on grounds of public policy ; the authority to deal with the question to be the Quarter Sessions, acting on reports made by the local magistrates. The amount of the compensation was to be ascertained on the principle of the difference between the value of the premises with and without a license. The compensation fund was to be raised entirely from the trade by a surtax on licenses, which was giving to the public rather better terms than it was entitled to, for the underlying theory was that the remaining houses would get the trade which formerly went to those abolished ; but if the Bill was to result in less drinking, without which result there was no object in reducing the public-houses in number, the remaining houses would obviously not get the whole of this, and the country might, therefore, have reasonably been called upon to contribute a share. No such contribution was asked for, and the trade accepted the situation, and undertook the whole responsibility. It might have been thought that the Temperance Party would have eagerly accepted a measure which gave them so much the best of the bargain. Not at all, they fell on it furiously from the first, and the Opposition made it a party question. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman waxed quite eloquent on the first reading, Mr Balfour replying effectively, and pointing out the harm which extreme Temperance Reformers did to their cause by coupling it with injustice. Mr Lloyd-George, who so often marred his exceedingly able Parliamentary speeches by his inability to keep off the personal, seized the occasion

to make an attack on Mr Balfour, whom he accused of having brought in the Bill for the special benefit of a corrupt section of his supporters in Manchester, a charge which Mr Balfour indignantly repudiated amid general cheers.

After this the Bill was read a first time.

The second reading debate was begun on May 9, and lasted three days. It was remarkable for two very successful maiden speeches from the Unionist side in favour of the Bill, delivered by Mr Worsley Taylor and Lord Morpeth respectively. The former had been returned for Blackpool at the General Election, but had not spoken before; the latter, after unsuccessfully contesting Gateshead as a Tariff Reformer in January, had been returned a few weeks later for South Birmingham, on the death of Mr Powell Williams, by an enormous majority, which showed that Mr Chamberlain's ascendancy in Birmingham was as great as ever. Several Unionist members, however, were not quite satisfied with the Bill, expressing a wish to see a time-limit introduced, so that all compensation should cease after a certain term of years. The Government resisted this, on the perfectly reasonable grounds that a time-limit, combined with money compensation, would work a curious state of injustice. There was something to be said for compensation by time only, more for money compensation; but to enact that money should be paid in accordance with the scheme of the Bill for, say, ten years, and that after that no pecuniary compensation for taking away a license should be given, would result in this: that those houses which survived the ten years would have found the money to compensate those which had disappeared, but that when their turn for disappearing came they would receive nothing

themselves ; which view prevailed, and the second reading was carried by 353 to 196.

The proposal for a time-limit was debated again on the Committee stage, on the motion of Colonel Williams, the Conservative member for East Dorset, who suggested a period of fourteen years. This was easily defeated, Mr Balfour, who took charge of the measure, showing his usual skill in debate. It was, however, very apparent that, though the Bill was supported by large majorities, the Opposition were trying—and quite rightly from their own point of view—to smother it with amendments, and the discussion upon it promised to last for ever ; recourse thereupon had to be had to our old friend the guillotine, which every party employs when in office, and shouts “gag” over, indignant at the curtailment of the privileges of Parliament, when in Opposition and the other party uses it. So it happened now. On July 1 Mr Balfour introduced a short “time-limit” to the debate ; and, evidently thinking that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, he proposed to give only four more days for the Committee stage, and two for the Report stage altogether. A hollow howl of indignation rent the Chamber, and the motion was debated for three nights, Mr Chamberlain intervening effectively on behalf of the Government, which brought Mr Winston Churchill, who now sat on the Opposition side—his proper place—to his feet. Being constantly and not very politely interrupted by the Ministerialists, he became exceedingly wrathful, and exclaimed that there was a carefully organised attack on the liberties of debate, in which Mr Chamberlain was an accomplice. An uproarious scene followed, the Speaker was appealed to, and Mr

Churchill withdrew the remark and sat down with his speech unfinished.

After this the Bill went through, and meeting with no serious Opposition in the Lords—who were always unwisely inactive during the long reign of the Unionist Government—became law.

I have hastened on to finish off the career of the Licensing Bill, leaving on one side many important events which occurred in this strangely exciting session. Just before the Whitsuntide recess we had another bad attack of “fiscalitis”—Mr Black, the Liberal member for Banffshire, whose untimely death caused by the Arbroath Railway accident his many friends have since had to deplore, having obtained the last chance for a private member’s resolution in the session, which he utilised by moving the following cleverly worded motion :—“That this House, believing that the Protective taxation of food would be burdensome to the people and injurious to the Empire, welcomes the declaration of Ministers that the Government is opposed to such taxation.” This looked like a vote of confidence in the Government, but indirectly it was an attack on them for withdrawing the Wharton amendment, and it was a direct attack on Mr Chamberlain’s policy. It was, moreover, specially designed to catch the free food vote.

When the motion first appeared on the paper, Mr Chamberlain had put down an amendment expressing confidence in the Government; but at the last moment Mr Balfour substituted one to the effect that, “this House considers it unnecessary to discuss the question of Fiscal Reforms, and the declaration of the Prime Minister at Sheffield on October 1, in regard to which His Majesty’s Government have

announced that no proposals will be laid before the present Parliament, and expressing its continued confidence in the present Administration, desires to proceed with the business proposed in the gracious speech from the Throne." The debate which followed was one of the most animated of the fiscal discussions.

Mr Black's motion was seconded by Mr George Goschen, the Unionist member for East Grinstead, who bitterly complained that another gentleman who was a Tariff Reformer had been chosen Unionist candidate for his constituency in lieu of himself, on account of his free food views. We were sorry for Mr Goschen, but this was a risk that every Free Fooder ran by putting himself out of sympathy with the great majority of his own supporters, especially those Free Fooders who, like Mr Goschen, would not even accept the Sheffield policy. Mr Wyndham moved Mr Balfour's amendment, and was followed by Lord Hugh Cecil, who greatly annoyed the Tariff Reformers by accusing Mr Chamberlain of a lack of courage, because he preferred to argue his case on the platform rather than in the House, where he would be confronted with his opponents. A serious scene followed this sharp attack, but Sir M. Hicks-Beach, the wisest of the Free Fooders, came to the rescue of the House and the Government, and declared that he should support Mr Balfour's amendment. This settled the matter, and the motion that Mr Black's words should be left out in order to insert Mr Balfour's was carried by a majority of 55; but as midnight intervened, there was no time to insert Mr Balfour's words, which were objected to by Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, with the result that the House simply passed the word "That." With

which *reductio ad absurdum* we separated for Whitsuntide.

Soon after our reassembly the Government narrowly escaped defeat more than once on the Budget, that fatal hour between nine and ten, when Unionist diners-out had not returned punctually, causing great embarrassment to the Whips, who were frequently without a majority for half an hour or more. Happily Messrs Banbury and Fitzalan Hope developed a strange loquacity just at this hour night after night, which curiously died away as Unionist members returned from their feasts. One night we never had a majority at all, and nothing could have saved the Ministry had not an over-zealous member of the Opposition moved the adjournment of the debate about 12.30 A.M., which Mr Austen Chamberlain accepted at once, much to the astonishment and annoyance of some Unionist members who had returned from dining, but were unaware of the condition of affairs. Nor were matters progressing any better in the country. With the exception of Chertsey, we lost every by-election which occurred. North Dorset and Devonport were won from us by the Opposition. In the Market - Harborough and Sowerby divisions the Liberal candidates were returned by greatly increased majorities; a little later Mr Alan Bright, an extreme Radical, won the Oswestry division, which had been Conservative from time immemorial. But Mr Balfour cared for none of these things, he had firmly resolved neither to dissolve nor to resign so long as he retained a majority in the House of Commons.

On July 8 an event occurred outside Parliament which excited considerable interest. It was Mr Chamberlain's sixty-eighth birthday, and it had

been resolved to celebrate the event by giving him a great public dinner at the Hotel Cecil. Two hundred members of the House of Commons, all of whom were supporters of his policy of preferential trade, took part in it, and it was a great success. No members of the Government were present, though many were known to sympathise, so that including them his followers were clearly a large majority of the Unionist Party in the House of Commons. Everything was done to identify the evening with his policy and personality; to each member present an orchid was presented—and most of them put them on; the menus were called "bills of fare," and printed in English throughout. This caused some difficulty to the organisers of the feast, especially the words *hors d'œuvres*, the only translation which the hotel managers could suggest being "appetisers." We felt, however, that Tariff Reform required no appetising, so the *hors d'œuvres* had to be omitted and melons substituted. Sir Herbert Maxwell presided, and proposed Mr Chamberlain's health in an admirable speech. Mr Chamberlain's reply was noticeable for the generous tribute he paid to Mr Balfour as leader of the Unionist Party.

A few days later Mr Chamberlain took part in another extra-Parliamentary function—the reorganisation of the Liberal-Unionist Party under his auspices—which caused his opponents to describe it as "a machine for promoting Protection." A great meeting was held at the Albert Hall on the evening of the 14th, at which two members of the Government who were officers of the new association, Lord Lansdowne and Mr Lyttelton, also spoke. This greatly excited the Opposition, who demanded a day for a

vote of censure on the Government in the Commons, on the ground that some of its members "had accepted official positions in an association which had formally declared its adhesion to a preferential policy involving the taxation of food." The debate took place on Bank holiday (August 1), and was in some respects the dullest and least profitable Bank holiday entertainment I ever attended. Mr Chamberlain, however, made the suggestion that as doubts had been thrown on the genuineness of the colonial offer, a Colonial Conference should be specially summoned to discuss preferential trade; and Mr Balfour excelled himself by declaring that his views on the Fiscal question were unalterably fixed and perfectly clear. Nobody doubted their fixedness, nor that they were clear to Mr Balfour himself; but I do not honestly believe that there was a single member on either side who, with the best will in the world, could have given a certain and satisfying explanation of them.

The only other events of importance during the remainder of the session were Mr Arnold Forster's exposition of his Scheme of Army Reform, and the debates which it gave rise to. Just as Mr Brodrick had had his plan, and Mr Haldane now has his, so Mr Arnold Forster had his at this time, a regular War Office sealed pattern, the "expert military advisers" being apparently prepared to support each in turn. It is perhaps fortunate that such plans usually come to very little in practice (which may account for the easy compliance with each and all of them by the experts), with the result that the Army is left to work out its own salvation, merely calling certain things by different names. A large House assembled to hear Mr Arnold Forster, whose know-

ledge of the subject and painstaking ability were universally recognised, and his speech as such was successful. He began by abolishing everything which had been instituted by Mr Brodrick, who was sitting by his side; army corps, reserve regiments, three years' service, militia reserve, all went by the board. He then proposed to put an end to Lord Cardwell's "linked-battalion" system, and to divide the regular army into long service and short service branches, the former to serve in India and the Colonies, the latter at home only. This part of his plan met with general approval. When he came to the auxiliary forces, however, he was not so fortunate. He proposed to reduce the numbers of the Volunteers considerably, but to raise the standard of efficiency. With regard to the Militia, he suggested that they should be reduced to a little over thirty battalions, and converted into short service regulars. This meant their total destruction *as militia*, and was opposed on these grounds; but he refused to see it in this light. Not that he did not take every opportunity of consulting militia officers; he actually attended a meeting of officers of both Houses at 5 o'clock on the afternoon of July 20, after that the House had been sitting all the night before and up to 3.40 that very afternoon—the longest sitting<sup>1</sup> of the

<sup>1</sup> This all-night sitting was memorable from the fact that Mr Spencer Charrington, the veteran member for Mile-End, sat through it, a wonderful performance for a man of eighty-six. A little souvenir of the occasion was given to him by those members who also sat through it, the presentation being made by Mr Balfour. It was memorable also for a happy retort of Mr Claude Lowther. Mr Winston Churchill had been attacking the Government as usual, and Mr Claude Lowther accused him of suffering from *beri-beri*, a disease which some of the Chinese coolies in South Africa had brought with them, and of which we heard much just at present. Asked to explain his meaning, Mr Lowther remarked that "one of the symptoms was a *gigantic swelling on the head!*"

House in my memory—and entered into a full discussion of his proposals. His plans for the Militia had not indeed the sanction of the Cabinet, but were put forward as embodying his own ideas, in the curious manner in which so many things were now done by the Government, the members of which differed from each other on most subjects, and they were generally condemned by the House. If the Militia were abolished, where would the country turn to find a force which could come out in time of war *in complete units*, to garrison the home stations and the Mediterranean, and to assist in keeping the lines of communication at the seat of war itself, thus freeing regular battalions for the front, as happened in the South African War? Nor was his proposed reduction in the numbers of the Volunteers well received; while the new regulations which he issued with a view to increasing their efficiency were exceedingly unpopular, and alienated from Unionist candidates some of the few voters they still had left. The view generally prevailed that so long as we depended on voluntary service alone for national defence, the more men we attracted to serve and grounded in the elements of soldiering, the better. Nobody supposed that the Volunteers would be put into the fighting line directly on the outbreak of war, and there would be time, therefore, for them to obtain greater efficiency through embodiment. Then the proposal to reduce their numbers, and to turn them into sort of sham regulars did not seem to be a wise one; this at least was an opinion expressed on both sides of the House when the scheme was debated on August 8. Four days later, on the day devoted to St Grouse, Mr Brodrick introduced the Indian Budget in one of those disgracefully

thin Houses which always assemble to discuss the "brightest jewel in the British Crown," and the following Monday we were prorogued. The Government had steadily lost ground, both in the House and in the country, during the session. But we had survived, in itself a wonderful feat, which no other leader but Mr Balfour could have accomplished.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE RECESS OF 1904-1905 AND THE SESSION OF 1905

THE recess of 1904-1905 was an active time politically. Notwithstanding the extraordinary staying powers which Mr Balfour had exhibited, nobody seriously thought that the Government could last through another session, and it was generally expected that the election would take place about Easter 1905. Members, therefore, or at least those who were intending to stand again, were very busy cultivating their constituents, an arduous task in county divisions. Apart from which, certain public events caused continuous interest. The Fiscal question raged as furiously as ever. Mr Chamberlain, indeed, did not undertake a set campaign as in 1904, but he occasionally dropped a six-inch shell in different parts of the country—each of which was followed as usual by a counterblast on the part of Mr Asquith or one of the other Opposition leaders.

He arranged to speak at Luton on October 5. Two days before, Mr Balfour, quite unexpectedly and at very short notice, delivered a speech in Edinburgh, evidently wishing to get in a word first. His speech was memorable, and was long quoted by the Free Fooders, as clear proof that he was on their side. He went out of his way to state explicitly that he

was not, and never had been, a Protectionist, and he even added that if the Unionist Party became a Protectionist Party he would retire from the leadership. This was great joy to the Free Fooders, but there was another side to the question. All depended on what he meant by "Protectionist." He went on to explain that *provided revenue was the object*, he had no objection to placing customs duties on competing imports from abroad *without imposing corresponding excise duties on the home products*. This would bring about in practice the very results at which Tariff Reformers were aiming, and they cared little or nothing about Mr Balfour's objects, so long as they got the results. Thus the Free Traders in the party had little ground for their jubilation; they had the objects only, we the results. On the question of Colonial Preference Mr Balfour was less satisfactory. It is true that he accepted Mr Chamberlain's proposal (made in his speech on the vote of censure) for summoning a special Colonial Conference for the purpose of discussing preference. He suggested, however, that at least two General Elections must be fought on the question before preference could be carried out, at the first of which the proposal to summon a conference was to be submitted to the country, at the second, the results of the conference. Mr Chamberlain at the Luton meeting, which was a great success in every way, demurred to this plan as causing unnecessary delay.

It may, perhaps, seem odd now, after our experience of the General Election of 1906, that we should have been looking forward then to so early a realisation of our hopes. But the fact was that nobody on our side expected the *débâcle* which subsequently occurred. We all thought the Liberals

would get a majority, but we counted on its being so small that they would be entirely dependent on the Irish vote, with the result that their days in office would be few and evil. Then we hoped to go to the country a second time with a clear issue on the Fiscal question, and to carry it straight away. It seemed intolerable that yet another election should be necessary, and this will not be tolerated when the time arrives.

The Tariff question came to the front again at the annual meeting of the National Union, which was held this year at Southampton, where Mr Chaplin was more successful than he had been last year at Sheffield, his resolution in favour of Mr Chamberlain's policy, which had been artfully composed out of sentences in Mr Balfour's speeches, being carried by a very large majority. It was expected that Mr Balfour would speak at length on the subject the same evening, but he was relieved from doing so by the attack which the Russian Fleet, under Admiral Rodjestvensky, had made on the North Sea fishing fleet, to the diplomatic aspects of which he devoted his entire speech. For some time past there had been great irritation in England against Russia on account of her treatment of British shipping during the Russo-Japanese War, and this outrageous attack was the culmination. There is no doubt that we were within an ace of war, which was the more serious since, if it had happened, Russia would have found herself at war with two powers at once, which might have compelled France to join in under the terms of the Dual-Alliance, a most lamentable result in view of the recently established *entente cordiale*. Even greater danger was apprehended from Germany, always willing to fish in troubled waters. The

country, however, was determined to have reparation—and no set of men were more bellicose than the Labour leaders, who are usually such opponents of what they call "militarism" and all its ways. The reason, of course, was that the sufferers in the North Sea outrage were not bloated millionaires or hated capitalists, but working men. Thus does class feeling override preconceived opinion. Mr Balfour's speech at Southampton was very reassuring, and the Government, who kept a cool head in the crisis (whatever may be thought of much of their policy, the management of foreign affairs by Lord Lansdowne was always excellent), ultimately emerged from the difficulty with considerable credit. Thus, between the Fiscal question and the North Sea outrage, we were kept pretty well occupied through the winter, until we reassembled for the last time on February 14.

Directly we met, the Opposition made a vigorous attempt to defeat the Government, Mr Asquith moving an amendment to the Address demanding an immediate dissolution. They relied largely on the growing divisions in the Unionist Party, which had indeed become very serious, largely through the fact that in several constituencies which were represented by Free Fooders, the local associations, in which the Tariff Reform element predominated, had adopted Tariff Reform candidates, thus giving the sitting members notice to quit. The most conspicuous example of this was at Greenwich, where Mr Hamilton Benn had been adopted in opposition to Lord Hugh Cecil, with the full support of the Tariff Reform League. As a member of the Executive of that body, I could but acquiesce in this, it being from the Tariff Reform point of view

most desirable that Lord H. Cecil should be defeated (he was, in fact, by far the ablest and most dangerous enemy whom Mr Chamberlain had to face, and had undertaken a sort of crusade with a view to saving the Unionist Party from what he regarded as a ruinous Protectionist policy); but in common with many other Tariff Reformers who were strong Conservatives and churchmen, I deeply regretted the turn of events. These measures had infuriated the Free Fooders, who might, therefore, be expected to vote against the Government, while at the same time it was known that Mr Chamberlain wanted an early dissolution, and it was thought that he might force a crisis. This, however, he refused to do, though he stated in the debate that a dissolution had no terrors for him, and he hoped it would come soon. Lord Hugh Cecil took much the same line, and there was besides a sort of general feeling among Unionists of all shades that as the Government had gone on so long, they had better be allowed to continue for the present and try to pass the Aliens Bill and Redistribution, both of which figured in the King's Speech. Most members, too, were unwilling to let the other side in so long as the Russo-Japanese War continued, remembering the miserable weakness of Liberal foreign policy in Gladstonian days. Thus Mr Asquith's amendment fizzled, the Government securing a majority of 63; and of the two great irreconcilables, Mr Chamberlain voted for the Ministry, and Lord H. Cecil walked out.

No sooner, however, had the Government escaped from the fiscal peril than a new and unexpected danger arose, which nearly engulfed them. It was Ireland's turn now. In the middle of the summer holidays the country had been startled by the pro-

mulgation by Lord Dunraven and his friends of a plan of "devolution" of Irish Government, which was neither Unionism nor Home Rule, but a sort of half-way house, in which Irishmen of all persuasions were to live in happiness for ever after. The fact is, that these gentlemen thought that as they had been successful in solving the Land question in the teeth of the opposition of the Landlords' Convention, they could also solve the political difficulty in Ireland; and they must be credited with the best of intentions. It was whispered at the time, that Sir Antony Macdonnell, the Irish Under-Secretary, was a party to their plans, and Mr Wyndham too; but the latter cleared himself by at once sending a long letter to the papers, repudiating the scheme. The matter remained in abeyance till the meeting of Parliament. Two days after we assembled, questions were put to Mr Wyndham by Mr Craig, one of the most active of the Ulster Unionist Party, who had been elected for South Antrim at a by-election, caused by the appointment of Mr Macartney to the post of Deputy-Master of the Mint, with the result that the Chief Secretary admitted that Sir A. Macdonnell had assisted Lord Dunraven in drawing up the Devolution Scheme, and added that the Cabinet had censured Sir A. Macdonnell for this, though they made no imputation on his personal loyalty. A great sensation was caused by this statement, which was intensified the next day, when in the House of Lords Lord Dunraven made a clean breast of the whole proceeding, saying among other things that he had often discussed the possibility of creating a moderate party in Ireland, having such a scheme as devolution as its policy, with Mr Wyndham himself. In the same debate Lord Lansdowne stated that

Lord Dudley, the Lord-Lieutenant, had been cognisant of what was going on, and did not think that Sir A. Macdonnell had exceeded his functions. The matter could not be left here. It happened that Mr Redmond had given notice of the usual Nationalist amendment to the Address, condemning the Irish administration root and branch; and the Ulster Unionists, led by Mr Moore, who suddenly jumped into prominence as a most skilful debater, seized upon this to make a violent attack on Mr Wyndham from the opposite standpoint, loudly accusing the Chief Secretary of tampering with the Union, and intriguing against the Irish loyalists. Mr Wyndham replied vigorously, repudiating these charges, but was evidently in a position of great difficulty. He said that he had always regarded Sir A. Macdonnell rather as a colleague than as Under-Secretary, and when he was speaking of the censure which had been passed on him, Mr W. Churchill jumped up and asked whether Lord Dudley was included in it, to which he could only reply that the Cabinet, at the time, was unaware of Lord Dudley's action. The debate continued all the next day, and in the end the Government escaped with a majority of 50, the Ulster Party and several other Unionists abstaining. Had the division been taken on a direct Ulster motion instead of on Mr Redmond's amendment, for which no Unionist could vote, the Government would have fared even worse. The next day the question arose again on the adjournment of the House, which was moved by Mr Redmond, in order to discuss the terms of Sir A. Macdonnell's appointment. The debate was memorable from the fact that Mr Wyndham read out the letters which had passed when it was made. Sir A. Macdonnell stated

quite frankly that he was an Irishman, a Roman Catholic, and a Liberal in politics, adding, "I have strong Irish sympathies, and I do not see eye to eye to you in all matters of Irish administration"; but he agreed to take office in order to follow a certain policy, which was sympathetic with some Irish Nationalist ideals, though it did not include "devolution." A few days later Mr Wyndham resigned. His position had become untenable, most Unionists feeling that he had somehow or other managed to commit himself in a way that rendered his continuance in office a source of weakness and embarrassment to a Unionist Government. But all the same great sympathy was felt for him. His personal integrity remained unblemished. As a debater he stood on a very high level, and his speeches were beautifully phrased. He was a great loss to the front bench, which was none too strong. He had scored a notable triumph over the Land Purchase Act, and possibly he, too, with his sanguine temperament and devotion to ideals, thought as the Dunraven Committee did, that he could solve the old political feud in Ireland. It may be that he was only a little in advance of his time. For the moment, however, it was very necessary that the Unionist Party should reassert their Unionism, which, for the past six months, had lain under a grave suspicion. This they did by appointing Mr Walter Long, the most practical and hard-headed man in the Cabinet, to the vacant place. At the same time, Sir A. Macdonnell, the *fons et origo mali*, was retained in office, as was Lord Dudley, who was said to have participated in his projects—an arrangement which recalled several situations in Gilbert and Sullivan's operas, but nowhere else.

About the same time that Mr Long succeeded Mr Wyndham at the Irish Office, another vacancy occurred in the Cabinet, through the appointment of Lord Selborne to succeed Lord Milner in the very important position of High Commissioner for South Africa, a selection generally approved of at the time, and thoroughly justified by results. A little later, Lord Onslow, the Minister for Agriculture, became Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords, causing yet another vacancy. Thus occurred the fourth and final reconstruction of the Ministry. Mr Gerald Balfour succeeded Mr Long at the Local Government Board, and was himself succeeded at the Board of Trade by Lord Salisbury, an appointment objected to in some quarters on the ground that he was a peer, and was not a man of business. Lord Cawdor, who had not done much in politics recently, but had made a great reputation as Chairman of the Great Western Railway, became First Lord of the Admiralty in place of Lord Selborne. The Ministry of Agriculture was filled by the appointment of Mr Ailwyn Fellowes, who had long been its representative in the House of Commons. This left a vacancy among the Junior Lords of the Treasury, of which more later.

To return to the debate on the Address, the Government rather scored over an amendment on Chinese Labour. The fact is that the slavery lies were beginning to be found out, in the House of Commons anyhow. An amendment on the question was moved by Dr Macnamara, who would have done better if he had confined himself to discussing education questions, about which he really knew a great deal. Two members of the House who had just returned from South Africa, Sir Gilbert Parker and

Mr Worsley Taylor, completely exposed the inaccuracy of the statements of the Opposition, and Mr Lyttelton spoke excellently, with the result that though Major Seely was more eloquent than ever, the Government secured a majority of 60. The anti-Chinese agitation had, indeed, nearly fizzled out at this time, but was unfortunately revived a little later by the occurrence of certain outrages, due to the fact that the earlier batches of Chinamen had been carelessly recruited and contained a certain proportion of bad characters, all of whom were promptly repatriated. The outrages were grossly exaggerated, and every one was reported in the papers, while Kaffir outrages passed unnoticed. Motor accidents are similarly advertised in the press, while we hear little of the far more frequent accidents occasioned by horses. The outrages, however, such as they were, resuscitated the anti-Chinese agitation in a more acute form than ever. At length, on March 1, the Address was carried.

Meanwhile far better relations had been established in the House between the Government and the Tariff Reformers. As Mr Chamberlain had decided not to force a crisis, but to continue to support the Ministry, we determined to show the Government that we were the section of the party on whom they had to rely against the defections of the Free Fooders and the ambuscades of the Opposition. We organised a series of dinners on the two Government nights before Easter, Mondays and Thursdays, thus helping the Whips to keep a House on those nights during that dangerous hour between 9 and 10 P.M. These dinners were very pleasant, and were also very useful in the way of keeping Tariff Reformers in touch with each other. The

group had grown considerably during the last session, and Mr Arthur Stanley was now an active member of it, as were also three veteran Conservative stalwarts, Colonel Kenyon Slaney with his Protestant laurels, won by his celebrated clause, still thick around him ; Colonel Lockwood, a most valuable ally under the circumstances, as he was Chairman of the Kitchen Committee ; and Sir F. Banbury, whose extraordinary loquacity at 9 P.M. on Government nights was one of the best assets of the party. On each of these occasions a member of the Government was invited as a guest—on one occasion, Mr Balfour ; on another, Mr Bonar Law, our ablest champion ; on another, again, Mr Walter Long, who had greatly enhanced his position by the plucky way he had stepped into the breach at the Irish Office ; on yet another, Sir Alexander Acland-Hood, the Chief Whip, who was not, however, generally credited with any violent leaning towards Tariff Reform. Altogether, we had begun to get on swimmingly, when certain events occurred which occasioned grave misgivings, and nearly produced a crisis.

The Opposition, or at least the private members thereof, who had lately been playing the game with much greater skill than formerly, partly, perhaps, in consequence of the appearance of Mr Winston Churchill among them, had secured, by balloting regularly and in great numbers, a large proportion of the nights set apart for private members' resolutions, and they put down a series of motions dealing with various aspects of the Fiscal question. The first of them stood in the name of Mr Winston Churchill himself, and was to the effect that the permanent unity of the British Empire would not be secured through a system of preferential duties based on the

protective taxation of food. This, Mr Balfour met by moving the previous question—a task entrusted to Mr Lyttelton. It was not the way out of the difficulty which Tariff Reformers would have preferred, but Mr Chamberlain accepted it, and the Government secured a majority of 42. Having done this, Mr Balfour proposed to treat the other resolutions with contempt, to absent himself from the House during their discussion, and to advise his supporters to do the same. I confess that many Tariff Reformers intensely disliked these tactics. They looked like a declaration of bankruptcy, and so they were, the real reason for them being that the Whips could not get their men up to the House on successive private members' nights to support the Government on the Fiscal question. Mr Chamberlain, however, was ill and away when this plan of campaign was agreed upon, and all that Tariff Reformers could do was to stipulate that the same treatment should be meted out to the motion on "retaliation," Mr Balfour's particular policy, as to those condemning the various items of Mr Chamberlain's proposals, to which the Whips agreed. Thus the Opposition, left to themselves, condemned a General Tariff of 10 per cent. on imported manufactured goods on March 22 by 254 votes to 2. On March 28 they condemned Retaliation *nem. con.* In like manner, they resolved on March 29 that Mr Chamberlain's proposals would be detrimental to Shipping, and on April 4 that the proposed Transference of food taxes from tea and cocoa to corn and meat would be burdensome to the poor, and that this must be made clear before any Colonial Conference was held. Meanwhile we were indulging in the unwonted pleasures of the theatre. On one of the earlier

occasions many of the Unionist Party, including Mr Balfour, were present at the performance of "Mr Hopkinson," a very amusing farce at Wyndham's Theatre, but not so amusing nor so tragic as that which was being enacted at St Stephen's.

The bankruptcy of the Government, notwithstanding Tariff Reform dinners and constant attendance, was indeed complete. It was shown in various ways; among others by a deplorable debate, which took place on March 10, when Mr Whittaker moved the second reading of the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Bill, the chief object of which was to reverse the Taff Vale decision. The Attorney-General (Sir R. B. Finlay) made a vigorous and lucid speech against it, but the Government allowed it to be an open question, and put no pressure on their supporters, with the result that it<sup>1</sup> was carried by a majority of 132. In the country they were even more bankrupt. They could not get a member elected as Junior Lord of the Treasury, to fill Mr Ailwyn Fellowes' place, for nearly three months. Mr Gerald Loder was first appointed, but was defeated at Brighton by Mr Villiers by over 800 votes. It must be said that the Brighton electors treated Mr Loder with the greatest ingratitude. He had represented the borough for upwards of seventeen years, and had been a model member. Now that after years of hard work he had reaped his reward by being given office, they turned him ignominiously adrift. After this rebuff Ministers hesitated long before they ventured

<sup>1</sup> The Bill never got any further. It was referred to a Standing Committee, on which the Unionists plucked up courage, and amended it in so drastic a fashion, that its promoters abandoned it. The antagonism felt by the Trades Unions in the country towards the Unionist Party was thereby greatly increased, as all Unionist candidates discovered at the General Election.

to make any other appointment. At length they selected Lord Edmund Talbot, whose seat was supposed to be quite safe, and he succeeded in holding it, but with only 400 to spare.

Meanwhile we were having some exciting debates on the Army estimates, Mr Arnold Forster's policy, especially so far as it affected the auxiliary forces, being roundly attacked by members on both sides. His attitude or want of attitude to the Militia was greatly resented, for while he announced that he did not intend to persist in the proposals which he had made last year for converting the force into short service regulars, and Lord Lansdowne made an even more explicit statement to this effect in the House of Lords, the Cabinet having overruled the proposal, he constantly spoke in the House as if this plan were still before the country, and he was clearly determined to carry it if he could. The result was that a most deplorable feeling of uncertainty was produced in the force, no militiaman knowing whether his unit was going to survive the next twelve months! Even more unpopular was his treatment of the Volunteers, and for several days in succession he found himself confronted with a phalanx of irate members who included not only Major Seely, Sir J. Dickson Poynder, and the old army group who had opposed Mr Brodrick, but also many others, such as Mr M'Crae and Mr Munro Ferguson, on the Opposition benches; and Sir Howard Vincent, Sir James Fergusson, Colonel Pilkington, and many others, on our side. The Government, indeed, had a narrower escape on the Army vote than they had either on the Fiscal question or on the Antony Macdonnell affair, a reduction moved by Mr M'Crae being negatived on April 5 by 31 votes only. For which result

Mr Arnold Forster alone must take the responsibility.

Easter fell very late this year, and in consequence the Budget was introduced before the recess, on April 10. Mr A. Chamberlain made a most admirable speech, which met with general approval, as did his proposals themselves, though he had not the means at his disposal to do very much. He had a realised surplus of nearly one and a half millions, which sum he proposed to use to strengthen the Exchequer Balances, on which it will be remembered he had drawn considerably last year. He anticipated a surplus at the end of the current year on the existing basis of taxation of nearly three millions. He proposed to deal with this by adding one million a year to the Sinking Fund, and by reducing the tea duty by 2d. He condoled with the income tax payer, but had nothing to give him.

It happened that the same night Mr Chamberlain was the guest of the Tariff Reformers at their dinner, and a very large number of members were present. Mr Chamberlain, in replying to the toast of his health, spoke most optimistically as to the prospects of his policy, which he was sure he would live to see carried. Then Mr Marshall Hall, who like myself had been at Rugby with Mr Austen Chamberlain, proposed his health, and congratulated Mr Chamberlain on the success which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had scored that day. It was a touching little compliment, and Mr Chamberlain was visibly affected. He is often painted by his political opponents as a hard, cold man, ready to sacrifice everything to his political schemes. It shows how we may mis-judge our opponents' characters. A man more warm-hearted, or one more devoted to his family

and his personal friends than Mr Chamberlain, never existed.

Just before the recess, part of the Government's legislative programme was launched, including the Aliens Bill (which had failed to pass last year) and the Bill for extending the provisions of the Agricultural Rates Act and the Tithe Rent Charge Act. These Acts, which as will be remembered had been violently opposed by the Radicals when originally introduced, had been renewed in 1901 for four years, and the Government now proposed to extend them again for another four, the great promised measure for the settlement of the whole rating problem not having seen the light of day yet. The Radicals now were as mild as lambs. The shadow of the approaching General Election was over them too, and they had no desire to arouse the unanimous opposition of all the farmers and all the clergy. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, though he said he had not changed his views, offered no opposition to the second reading; but one of his followers, Mr Whitley, was bolder, —no doubt because he happened to be a borough member—and proposed an amendment. This, however, was too much for so good a Liberal county member as Sir E. Strachey, and the debate degenerated into a squabble between the county and borough members on the Opposition side, much to the amusement of Ministerialists, who had their laugh at the expense of their opponents for once in a way. Mr Whitley's amendment was defeated by a majority of 115, and the Bill read a second time.

We concluded the long period before the Easter recess with the introduction of a Bill which attempted to bring some relief to the growing evil of unemployment, and which was brought in by Mr Gerald

Balfour and became law. Free Trade statisticians are always telling us of the wonderful growth of our imports and exports, and of our great material prosperity ; they do not explain why it is that this growth is accompanied by an even greater growth in the numbers of the unemployed. Prevention is better than cure, but as the Government and the country would do nothing in the way of the former, they had to try something in the way of the latter. Hence Mr Gerald Balfour's Bill.

When we reassembled after the holidays, there was an air of listlessness about the House. Like the House of Lords in the days of the Peninsula War, according to Sir W. Gilbert, we were doing "nothing in particular," but unlike them, we were not doing it "very well." The legislative pabulum was small in amount, and there seemed to be little doubt that the Aliens Bill, the Agricultural Rates Extension Bill, and the Unemployed Bill would all become law. The Government still talked about Redistribution, which Mr Balfour had designedly postponed to the end of the Parliament ; and some of the more sanguine spirits among the Unionists hoped that this at last would prove our salvation, that we should sink our fiscal differences, divest ourselves of our educational and Chinese unpopularity, and ride back triumphant on a Redistribution Bill, whether it actually became law, or was stopped by an unpatriotic and obstructive Opposition. The Redistribution Bill, however, had not yet made its appearance. Meanwhile we had some interesting debates, and at least one "scene."

We began with two educational debates. The Borough Council of East Ham had refused to administer the Act of 1902, because the rates were

too high, and the County Council of Merioneth had done the same, because they were determined not to raise rates at all for the benefit of Voluntary schools, with the result that they had been docked part of the Government grants under the provisions of the Defaulting Authorities Act of last year, which as Mr Osmond Williams—the Liberal member for Merionethshire—naively said was “very inconvenient,” as they had no money in the bank. These debates were chiefly important as illustrating the unpopularity of the Act of 1902. The ratepayers generally hated it, especially those in very poor districts, and those in the many districts, chiefly in rural areas, where an education rate was imposed for the first time. Concurrently, a violent Nonconformist agitation was proceeding, with passive resisters’ sales, defaulting authorities, and all the usual stock-in-trade. Nor were the clergy pleased. They had not forgotten the Kenyon Slaney clause, and some of them strongly objected to having to share with others that authority over the schools which they had exercised alone before.

The following week we were treated to another vote of censure. This time it was in connection with the position of Sir A. Macdonnell as Under-Secretary in Ireland. Before it began, Mr Wyndham, who had been ill and absent from the House, made a pathetic statement as to the events which led to his resignation, which did not, however, shed much fresh light on the scene. The debate which followed was very dull, and only added to the obscurity of the situation.

Two days later (May 11) Mr Balfour made a very important statement of the work and objects of the Committee of Defence, which had been lately reconstituted. In its new form, with its records and its

secretariat, the Committee promised to become a very important and useful body, linking together the War Office and Admiralty; and for this the Unionist Government and Mr Balfour personally deserve the credit. His speech as to the views of the Committee was, however, reassuring and candid almost to the verge of danger, as leading the public to suppose that greater security existed than was actually the case. But it was greatly applauded and approved of in the House.

Now the Fiscal question came up again, and in rather an acute form. I have mentioned the *rapprochement* which had been going on between Mr Balfour and the Tariff Reformers. Shortly before Easter a general meeting of the Tariff Reform group had been held in one of the Committee rooms, presided over by Mr Chamberlain, and a statement of our opinions was drawn up to be submitted to Mr Balfour, with a view to arriving at some definite understanding.

A small deputation waited on Mr Balfour the next day, and the two points specially pressed (though many others were mentioned) were: (1) that Mr Balfour should agree to the setting up of a general tariff on goods (other than raw material) imported from abroad, which tariff could be employed to carry out his own policy of "retaliation"; (2) that he would withdraw the necessity for having two General Elections over the question of preference, one before and one after a Colonial Conference. Mr Balfour received the deputation with his accustomed courtesy, and promised to consider the representations made to him, and the matter was adjourned till after Easter.

For some time after the recess negotiations were proceeding between Mr Chamberlain and Mr Balfour

and one or two others, but with no very definite results. In the course of them somebody called to mind the fact that the Colonial Conference would meet automatically in 1906, in accordance with the resolution passed at its last meeting in 1902; and suggested that if the Government survived until then, the first or pre-Conference General Election need not be held, especially as it would be impossible to restrain the Colonial representatives from discussing preference. Nothing really had been decided on these lines, but the Opposition got wind of the suggestion, and thought that they were going to be cheated out of one obstacle in the way of Tariff Reform. Hence violent indignation—Mr Balfour being subjected on May 23 to a perfect deluge of questions on the part of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Mr Lloyd-George, Mr Soares, and other smaller fry, who heckled and browbeat him for a quarter of an hour, and then, being dissatisfied with his answers, moved the adjournment of the House. When we assembled in the evening, every seat was occupied. Mr Lowther, in the absence of the Speaker, who had been away through ill-health for some weeks, was in the Chair. Sir Henry made his speech, and then Mr Lyttelton got up, Mr Balfour intending to wind up the debate in the usual way.

But the wild men of the Opposition wanted Mr Balfour to reply at once, they would have none of Mr Lyttelton, and shouted him down whenever he tried to speak, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman himself aiding and abetting. For a whole hour he stood at the table before the shrieking assembly, ejaculating every two minutes, "Mr Deputy-Speaker, sir," beyond which he never got, and smiling blandly between times. At length Mr Lowther, who showed

wonderful patience, took the only course open to him, and availing himself of one of Mr Balfour's new rules which had not before been put to use, suspended the sitting. Thus did the House of Commons disgrace itself, with the connivance and approval of the leader of the Opposition.

A few days later we put on our best behaviour on the occasion of the resignation of Mr Gully from the Chair. All parties joined in the resolution of thanks to him for his distinguished services, which was moved by Mr Balfour, and seconded in the blandest tones by Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman. The next day Mr Lowther was elected Speaker, his special fitness for the post being universally acknowledged. He was the first Conservative who had held the office since the great Reform Act, and curiously, like his predecessor, he was elected by a moribund Government. The Opposition, mindful of the generous way in which the Unionists had re-elected Mr Gully after the General Election of 1895, refrained from opposing Mr Lowther, who was therefore elected unanimously, and congratulated by Mr Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Thus, notwithstanding fierce political differences, peace and amity prevailed in the House once more.

The Whitsuntide holidays now intervened, and the House was adjourned up to June 20. When we reassembled, we were at once confronted with a fresh awkward question for the Government. Earlier in the year attention had been drawn by the Auditor-General to the loss of public money occasioned by the disposal of stores at the termination of the war, and Mr Arnold Forster had appointed a Departmental Committee, presided over by Sir W. Butler, to inquire into the alleged scandal. The Committee's

report was now published, and was of a startling character. It stated that we had sold vast quantities of stores to certain contractors at a low figure, and had then bought back from the same persons what we required for the Army at a much higher figure, with the result that one man alone, named Meyer, had been making a daily profit of £2000 out of oats. The Committee further censured certain officers of the Supply Department, accusing them of having participated in a gross fraud. It was clear that something would have to be done, but the Government did not at first seem to realise the seriousness of the position. The evidence before the Butler Committee was incomplete, and some fuller investigation was necessary. Mr Balfour first proposed a Committee of the House of Commons; then, when pressed, he assented to a Royal Commission, and finally to a Statutory Commission, which would have full powers to compel the attendance of witnesses, etc. Of course, we had the inevitable vote of censure from the Opposition Bench, but before this was moved the names of the Royal Commission had been announced, and had given general satisfaction. The vote of censure fell flat in consequence, but it gave Mr Brodrick, who spoke very well, the opportunity of showing that the scandal was not nearly so great as had been represented.

A fortnight later the Government produced their scheme of Redistribution. They had decided to proceed by way of resolution, with the intention apparently of either bringing in a Bill to carry out the resolutions next session, or else of going to the country on the scheme contained in the resolutions. The plan, however, proved a dreadful fiasco. First of all, the scheme itself pleased nobody except the

Unionist members for very small boroughs, of whom there was a considerable number. Mr Henniker Heaton, for example, who usually opposed Redistribution, was to have Canterbury preserved for him. It gave the greatest dissatisfaction in the great centres of population, which felt that even now they were not getting their fair share of representation. The Nationalists were furious because the Irish members were to be reduced by 22, a really smaller reduction than they ought to submit to, while the Opposition were prepared to oppose anything. A scheme, indeed, which would have retained a member for Buteshire, with a population of 18,641, and Winchester, with 19,001, and would have given no more than one representative to Dudley with 96,916, and Lewisham with 128,346, was on the face of it indefensible; and so our great plan for rehabilitating ourselves with the electorate fizzled from the first. But worse was to follow. The Government had intended to have a general debate on the resolutions as a whole, and then to drop the matter for the rest of the session. The Speaker, however, questioned by Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, ruled, after careful consideration, that each of the resolutions (there were nine altogether) must be taken separately and discussed in Committee of the whole House, *i.e.*, amendments could be moved on every line or even word! This finished matters. It was July 17 when this ruling was given, and in order to debate the resolutions in detail, as suggested by the Speaker, we should have had to sit till Christmas. Mr Balfour at once announced the withdrawal of the resolutions, and a party meeting was summoned at the Carlton Club the next day.

The meeting took place, and reminded me exactly

of the party meeting nine years before, after the fiasco of the Education Bill in 1896. Mr Balfour again had a plan for the following session, which was destined not to be carried out. A Boundary Commission was to set to work at once during the prorogation, and a Bill based on their report was to be brought in early in 1906. In the meantime Mr Balfour urged his supporters to be constant in their attendance at the House, so as to save the Government from falling into one of the traps daily set by the Opposition.

The response to this appeal was extraordinary. Two days later the Government were defeated on Irish Supply. The whole event was so startling and unexpected, that I may perhaps be allowed to give my personal experiences. I had been ill with influenza, and had only resumed attendance three days before, and then at the urgent request of the Whips and contrary to doctor's orders, but with the express understanding that I was to be present at the afternoon sittings only. On this particular Thursday the Unionist Whips expected some ambush, and specially asked me to come down for an hour at all events after dinner. A somewhat rambling debate was taking place on the working of the Irish Land Act, and Mr Redmond had moved a reduction of the vote by £100. Nothing, however, occurred to disturb the serenity of the atmosphere during the dangerous hour between nine and ten, and at 10.45 I left the House, with the consent of the Whip at the door, who said that the danger was past. Many of us indeed felt that once again the Whips had raised the old cry of wolf for nothing. As I left the House I met Mr Winston Churchill, who wished me good-night in a very pleasant manner, saying I was wise to get back home after my recent illness. The next

day I was astonished to read that the Government had been defeated by 4 votes, 200 to 196, and that Mr Balfour had stated that the Cabinet would take time to consider what course they would pursue in view of what had occurred. The Opposition delight, of course, knew no bounds, Mr Redmond ejaculating, "The sorry farce is over"—in which he was a little previous.

The defeat had been brought about in this way. Usually the Opposition got their men down at nine sharp, relying on the Unionists being late returning, which they generally were; our Whips, however, were able to defeat this plan by putting up Sir F. Banbury and others to talk against time until we had a majority. On the present occasion their tactics were far more slim. They instructed their men not to be down till quite late, and then not to come into the Members' Lobby, where each member as he arrives is marked off by the Whips' assistants on both sides, but to hide down below in the cloak rooms, with the result that the Unionist Whips were quite unaware of how many of the Opposition there were in the House. Then when the division bell rang just at midnight, they sprang from their lairs, rushed into the "No" Lobby, and defeated the Government.

The next day, a Friday, the House was packed to overflowing. The Opposition were in a state of great jubilation. The Scottish Churches Bill (Committee stage) had been set down as the first order of the day, but Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman at once rose and moved the adjournment. He protested indignantly against any business being taken at a moment of "interregnum," when Ministers were considering whether they would resign or not, and his supporters

cheered him to the echo. Mr Balfour replied blandly enough, was quite unable to see any reason for Sir Henry's proposal, and, always ready with a Parliamentary precedent, pointed out that in 1895, after the defeat of the Rosebery Government on the Cordite vote, the Naval Works Bill had been proceeded with the same evening. He got his own way, and rather more than he expected, for the Opposition refused to discuss anything, and would not listen to members on their own side who wished to move amendments to the Scottish Churches Bill, with the result that the remaining clauses were rushed through in silence, including the fifth clause, which was highly controversial, and on which many a dour Scottish Radical was anxious to have a say.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime a great deal was going on behind the scenes. Little knots of Unionists were to be seen in every corner of the lobbies eagerly discussing the situation. Opinion was divided as to whether the Government should treat the incident seriously, and either resign or dissolve, or should ignore it and continue as before; but the majority favoured the latter course. All were agreed that the defeat was the result of a clever but not very creditable manœuvre, which was a reason for treating it with contempt. Some Tariff Reformers,

<sup>1</sup> The fifth clause had nothing to do with the dispute between the United Frees and Wee Frees, but granted to the Established Church of Scotland liberty in regard to the formula of subscription on ordination, which might in future be prescribed from time to time by the General Assembly. Its presence in the Bill was a case of "tacking," undoubtedly, and was opposed by the Disestablishment Party in England, who resented the idea of an Established Church obtaining greater freedom, and was supported for the same reason by English churchmen. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, Mr Bryce, and the narrower minded Scottish Liberals opposed it, but it secured the support of Mr Haldane and others, who thought that it was fair that the Established Church should obtain relief in the case of a very old standing grievance.

however, felt that the situation had long been well-nigh intolerable, and that this was an opportunity of ending it. They thought, and quite rightly, that the longer we stopped in office the more we lost ground in the country. On the other hand, the party generally were anxious to see Lord Lansdowne renew in an extended form the Japanese alliance, the negotiations in regard to which were proceeding; many members, too, still had faith in the healing virtues of a Redistribution Bill next year. Besides this, nobody much wanted a dissolution in August, the metropolitan and suburban members being particularly averse to it, fearing that all their best supporters would be away at Margate! After all, was a January dissolution preferable? Then again, the old plan of postponing the evil day had great attraction. A round-robin to Mr Balfour was started and eagerly signed by a large number of Unionists, who, as Mr Lloyd-George not altogether untruthfully said, prayed to be delivered from meeting their constituents.

These views prevailed with the Prime Minister. After the week-end holiday a crowded House assembled again to hear the decision on Monday. Mr Balfour certainly made out a good case. He quoted endless precedents of Governments refusing to resign under similar circumstances. His most effective point was an extract from a letter from Mr Gladstone to Lord Granville, written when his Ministry was in grave difficulties in 1873, having been repeatedly defeated in the House, and having also, like the existing Government, lost many by-elections. "A Ministry with a majority," he wrote, "and that majority not in rebellion, should not resign on account of adverse manifestations even of very numerous single constituencies, and could not do so

without making a precedent, and constitutionally a very bad precedent." He then proceeded to make the extraordinary suggestion that the best plan would be for the members of the Cabinet "to get up some honourable dissension among themselves, which would enable them to extricate themselves from the embarrassment." Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman replied vigorously, remarking among other things that Mr Balfour used not to pay so much deference to Mr Gladstone's opinions when he was alive. A long wrangle then ensued as to the course of the debate, the day having been allotted to Sir E. Grey for one of the numerous votes of censure moved on the Government at this period. It was finally agreed that the one debate should include the other, and the discussion lasted till the dinner hour, when it came to a lame conclusion, no division being taken. This resulted from the fact that Mr Balfour, in order to bring the debate on his statement into order, had put up Sir A. Acland-Hood to move the adjournment of the House, and as the Opposition always wanted the House to adjourn, they naturally did not vote against it. The crisis ended, therefore, in our all getting home to dinner.

So the trouble was over for the moment, and the rest of the session was tame and uneventful. The Aliens Bill, the Scottish Churches Bill, and the Unemployed Workmen's Bill became law, the last-named in a very emasculated shape. We had an interesting discussion on the new Transvaal Constitution promulgated by the Government, which, though it was not fully responsible Government was a step in that direction, and which, if it had been carried out, would probably have worked well, and would have given time for the complete healing of

the wounds of the war, and for the permanent establishment of British ascendancy. Unfortunately, the Unionist Government failed to carry it out before they vacated office, and their successors, in their intense desire to get rid of the Chinese labourers, and so to escape from the difficulties into which their election pledges had placed them, abrogated it, and gave responsible Government at once, with the result, as we know, that the country has again been handed back to the Boers. Another interesting question was raised over the differences between Lords Curzon and Kitchener in connection with Army administration, two great men whom even India was not big enough to hold. A compromise seemed to have been arranged by Mr Brodrick, but it did not work, and shortly after the session Lord Curzon resigned. On August 11 we were prorogued, but we continued our existence in a sort of informal way for two days more, in order to entertain Admiral Caillard and the officers of the French Squadron, which was visiting Portsmouth, to lunch in Westminster Hall, a memorable occasion which seemed to set the seal on the *entente cordiale*. After this we departed, most of us not to return.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE END

THE earlier part of the recess was a time of peace and quiet. We were resting after our violent but successful efforts at survival. Later on, when political campaigning recommenced, there was no sign of an early crisis. We imagined that we should go through the recess as in previous years, and meet in February to pass or be defeated on a Redistribution Bill. In the meantime, certain events abroad had redounded to the credit of the Government. The Russo-Japanese War had been concluded, and had been followed by the new treaty with Japan, for which we felt we were indebted to Lord Lansdowne's admirable diplomacy.

But the end was near. The Cabinet was falling to pieces. The first sign was given on November 1, by Lord Londonderry, who made a speech very hostile in tone to Mr Chamberlain and his policy. The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Austen Chamberlain) and Mr Chamberlain himself replied, the latter criticising Lord Londonderry not too politely. Then followed the annual National Union Conference, this year at Newcastle, for which Mr Balfour stayed as Lord Londonderry's guest at Wynyard. At a meeting at Seaham, Mr Balfour spoke in almost affectionate terms of his long

political and personal friendship with his host. The Conference itself was a triumph for Mr Chamberlain, Mr Chaplin again carrying a resolution in favour of his policy, which, like that of last year, was compounded out of tags of Mr Balfour's speeches. In the evening Mr Balfour addressed a great public meeting at Newcastle, and urged the necessity for Unionist concentration on a moderate policy of Fiscal Reform. A week later Mr Chamberlain spoke at Bristol, and while paying the highest tribute to Mr Balfour, advocated the adoption of a forward policy. The next day the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, the last named of which had become a sort of semi-inspired Balfourite organ, announced simultaneously that a crisis was imminent. They continued to reiterate this for a fortnight, though Mr Balfour himself said nothing, and some members of the Cabinet denied that there was any crisis at all. On December 4, Mr Balfour resigned.

Such in outline are the facts which led up to this unexpected and momentous decision. But what the real causes of it were I do not pretend to know. Mr Chamberlain said nothing at Bristol which he had not said before. The differences between him and Mr Balfour were certainly no more acute than formerly. As we had gone through the sessions of 1904 and 1905, there was no reason whatever why we should not have survived the recess of 1905-1906—we were quite immune from the attacks of the Opposition during the recess—and have met Parliament again in 1906 with a Redistribution Bill. But Mr Balfour thought otherwise. That cold, philosophic soul, whose very strength was generally mistaken for weakness, who had endured so much

and seemingly cared so little, suddenly decided that the game was up. So he resigned, and put the other side in, and we went to the country in cold, dreary January—and on a new register!

Had tactics anything to do with it? According to Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, they had—the late Government, he said, “lived by tactics and died of tactics,” and for once he may not have been far wrong. To put the others in and make them show their hand, had long been a favourite policy of many Unionists. Another tactical scheme was to compel them to come into office just before the beginning of a new session, so that they would not have time to properly prepare their measures for the year. But in view of the gathering of the vast allied forces of the Opposition, minor tactics were of no avail now. So far as they went they failed. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman had not the difficulty which had been anticipated in forming his Government. No leader of a party which has spent nearly twenty years in the cool shades of Opposition has much difficulty. Lord Rosebery, it is true, stood out; he could not serve under the musty banner of Home Rule which Sir Henry with less than his usual adroitness had waved a few days before, but his lieutenants of the Liberal League, Mr Asquith, Mr Haldane, Sir E. Grey, and Sir H. Fowler had no such self-denying scruples. They had received “explanations” apparently not given to their Chief. So with them to represent the Liberal Imperialists, and Messrs Lloyd-George, John Burns, and Winston Churchill to represent the Little Englanders, the Government looked a strong combination on paper—and the average British elector, with his honest but peculiar ideas of fair play, said, “Give them a chance.”

The rest is known. The new Government accepted office, to dissolve immediately, and the elections were held at the earliest possible moment after the Christmas holidays. The first contest took place at Ipswich, on January 5, and the Liberals ominously carried both seats. This, however, was only an affair of outposts. The next day, when the fight was fairly joined, we lost seventeen seats, including every one in Manchester and Salford, Mr Balfour himself being defeated by nearly 2000! After this the country went fairly mad, and no Unionist strong-hold was safe against the Liberal and Labour attack. Members of the late Administration were ousted in all parts of the country. Mr Chamberlain's marvellous personality, it is true, saved Birmingham, with large majorities in every division; and Mr Austen Chamberlain was equally successful in East Worcestershire. But even the Chamberlain area was sadly curtailed, Dudley, Kidderminster, Coventry, Wednesbury, West Bromwich, and West Wolverhampton falling to the enemy. Lancashire and Cheshire went terribly against us, the latter, which used to be a most Conservative county, returning thirteen Liberals and not one Unionist. Then Scotland reverted almost entirely to the Liberal allegiance, while in Wales not a single Unionist was returned. In London we lost thirty-one seats, and a great hole was made in the Unionist rampart round London, four seats being lost in Middlesex, three in Surrey, five in Essex, and four on balance in Kent. Among the last named was the Tonbridge Division, where, though I polled 311 more votes than I did when I was returned in 1900 with a majority of over 2000, I was defeated by 1283, the Radical poll having increased by no less than 3676! The great increase

in the Liberal polls, and the very high percentage of electors who voted, were features of this extraordinary election, the working men marching to the polling booths in crowds, determined to put the Tories out and the Liberals in. Altogether, we lost on balance 215 seats, the greatest turnover since the Reform Act. We went to the country 371 strong; we returned a miserable 156.

What were the chief causes? Some people say the Education policy; others, Chinese Labour. According to the *Spectator* and those who agree with it, it was the determination of an enlightened people not to tamper with the sacred economic principles of Free Trade. Others attribute it to Mr Chamberlain's malign influence; others again to Mr Balfour's leadership. I have no doubt that the Education Acts and the lies told about Chinese Labour had much to do with it. The former had alienated the great majority of the Nonconformists; not merely the political Nonconformists so called, but that great body of moderate Nonconformity which had been largely on our side since the Home Rule split of 1886. As to the Chinese lies, they were hardly believed in the form that they were told. I do not think that the electors generally believed in the slavery or the chains, but they somehow felt, quite erroneously, that the Chinese had done them out of a good job, and they had a sort of vague fear that the day was coming when cheap yellow labour would undercut and undersell highly paid White labour all over the world—and in this were they far wrong? But neither of these was the chief cause; nor was the Fiscal question. No doubt the perplexity caused by the coexistence of Mr Chamberlain's policy, which was at least definite and clear, with

Mr Balfour's, which was equally indefinite and obscure, caused embarrassment and disorganisation ; but in other respects Tariff Reform gained more votes on account of its attractive features than it lost through the little loaf. All these things contributed to the result, as did also very largely the fury of the Trades Unions over the Taff Vale decision and the failure of the Unionist Government to do anything to help them in this direction ; also, the anger of the Postal Employees at certain injudicious remarks made by Lord Stanley, the Postmaster-General ; and also the resentment felt by the Volunteers against Mr Arnold Forster. But the real cause was none of these, but was that the country was tired of the Unionist Government, and had made up its mind to have a change. We had got in, in 1895, through the determination of the people not to have Home Rule, and on the reaction which set in against the Gladstone-Rosebery Government. We had got in again, in 1900, through the accident of the war. But the war was over, and we had long out-stayed our welcome. Every week since 1903 had lost us votes. Then the personnel of the Government, especially in its later stages, excited no enthusiasm, the majority even of Cabinet Ministers being little known outside the Houses of Parliament. The people wanted to have a change, and meant to have it. In their eagerness they almost wiped out the great Unionist Party, which Lord Salisbury, Lord R. Churchill, and Sir M. Hicks-Beach on the one side, and the Duke of Devonshire, Mr Chamberlain, and Mr Goschen on the other, had founded, and over which Mr Balfour had so long presided in the House of Commons. At the same time they established a new party—Labour by name, Socialistic in its objects—which may lead

the country into strange paths. The Official Liberals were the immediate beneficiaries of the change, but how long they can resist the Labour pressure from below, so obnoxious to the wealthy Capitalists on whom they depend for the sinews of war, no man can tell. That our party will come again I do not doubt. But let its revival be due to its own merits, to bold and skilful leadership, and to scientific and democratic organisation, rather than to the demerits and divisions of our opponents. The country cannot be permanently governed by violent swings of the pendulum.



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